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NUMBER TWO JOY STREET

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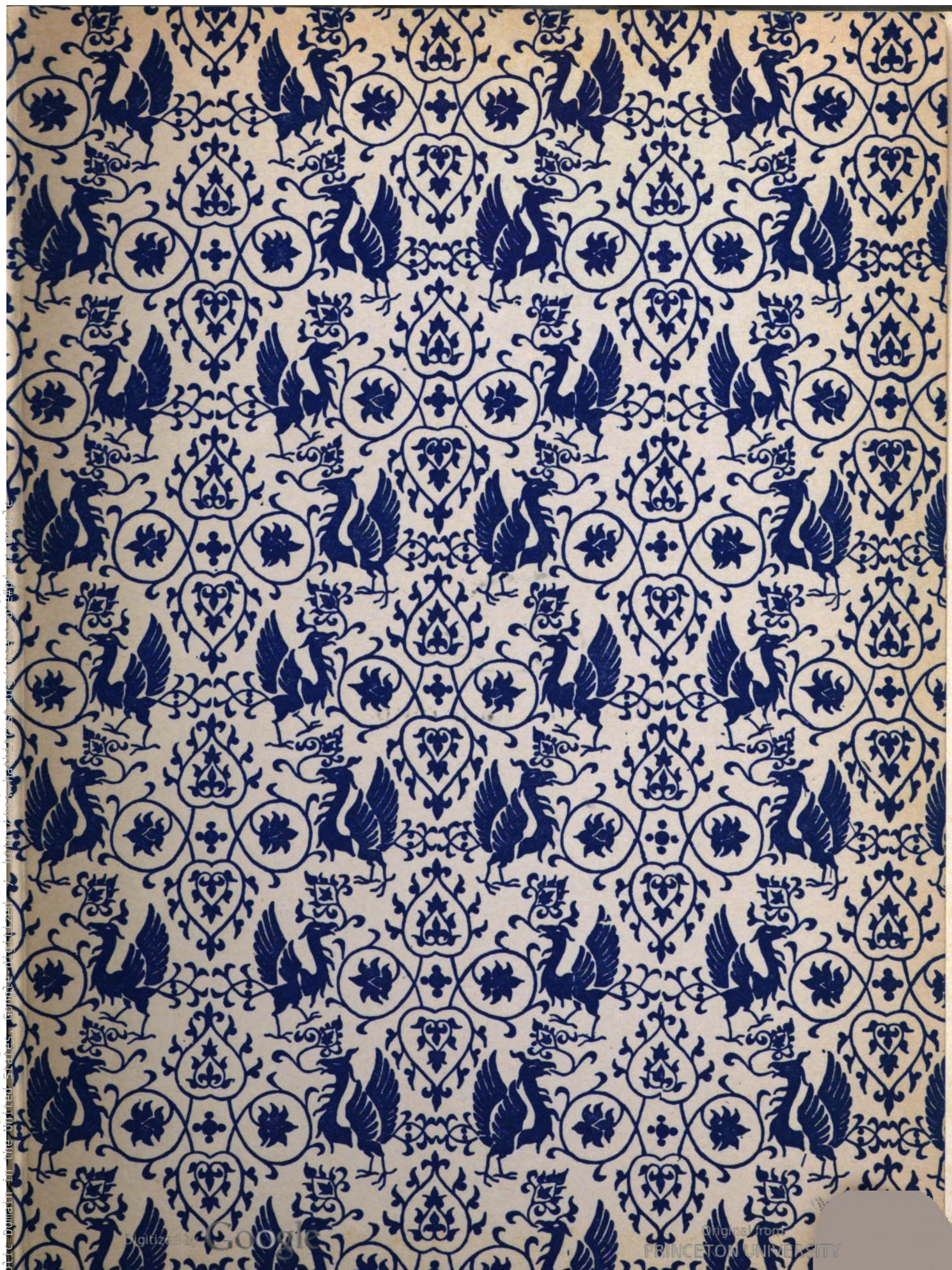
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Mother gives

NUMBER TWO JOY STREET

to Lucia Hart

for Christmas 1934



TO
THE AUTHORS AND ARTISTS
WHO, BY THEIR SKILFUL FURNISHING
OF NUMBER ONE JOY STREET, HAVE
MADE POSSIBLE THE BUILDING OF
NUMBER TWO

THEY

WE found them in the little wood,
We found them suddenly one day:
We heard a tiny laughing sound
Close, close beside us on the ground,
And it was **THEY**.

We stood and looked, we held our breath;
The little minutes seemed like hours.
They did not speak, they did not stir,
But strange their little faces were
Among strange flowers.

There came a wind, there came a cloud;
The ferns were like a tossing sea. . . .
We searched and searched about the place,
But they were gone without a trace—
How could it be?

ROSE FYLEMAN.

Number Two Joy Street

*A Medley of Prose & Verse
for Boys and Girls*

By

G. K. CHESTERTON
WALTER DE LA MARE
A. A. MILNE
HILAIRE BELLOC
HUGH WALPOLE
LAURENCE HOUSMAN
MADELEINE NIGHTINGALE
EDITH SITWELL
HUGH CHESTERMAN
MABEL MARLOWE
VALERY CARRICK
B. KATHLEEN PYKE
MARIAN ALLEN
THOMAS QUAYLE
BLANCHE WINDER
ROSE FYLEMAN

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1955-6



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NUMBER TWO JOY STREET



PRINCE RABBIT

By A. A. MILNE

ONCE upon a time there was a King who had no children. Sometimes he would say to the Queen, "If only we had a son!" and the Queen would answer, "If only we had!" And then on another day he would say, "If only we had a daughter!" and the Queen would sigh and answer, "Yes, even if we had a daughter, that would be something." But they had no children at all.

As the years went on, and there were still no children in the Royal Palace, the people began to ask each other who would be the next King to reign over them. And some said that perhaps it would be the Chancellor, which was a pity, as nobody liked him very much; and others said that there would be no King at all, but that everybody would be equal. Those who were lowest of all thought that this would be a satisfactory ending of the matter; but those who were higher



up felt that, though in some respects it would be a good thing, yet in other respects it would be an ill-advised state of affairs; and they hoped, therefore, that a young Prince would be born in the Palace. But no Prince was born.

One day, when the Chancellor was in audience with the King, it seemed well to him to speak what was in the people's minds.

"Your Majesty," he said; and then stopped, wondering how best to put it.

"Well?" said the King.

"Have I your Majesty's permission to speak my mind?"

"So far; yes," said the King.

Encouraged by this, the Chancellor resolved to put the matter plainly.

"In the event of your Majesty's death——" He coughed and began again. "If your Majesty ever *should* die," he said, "which in any case will not be for many years—if ever—as, I need hardly say, your Majesty's loyal subjects earnestly hope—I mean they hope it will be never. But assuming for the moment—making the sad assumption——"

"You said you wanted to speak your mind," interrupted the King. "Is this it?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"Then I don't think much of it."

"Thank you, your Majesty."

"What you are trying to say is, Who will be the next King?"

"Quite so, your Majesty."

"Ah!" The King was silent for a little. Then he said, "I can tell you who won't be."

The Chancellor did not seek for information on this

point, feeling that in the circumstances the answer was obvious.

"What do you suggest yourself?"

"That your Majesty choose a successor from among the young and the highly-born of the country, putting him to whatever test seems good to your Majesty."

The King pulled at his beard and frowned.

"There must be not one test, but many tests. Let all, who will, offer themselves, provided only that they are under the age of twenty and are well-born. See to it."

He waved his hand in dismissal, and with an accuracy established by long practice the Chancellor retired backwards out of the Palace.

On the following morning, therefore, it was announced that all those who were ambitious to be appointed the King's successor, and who were of high birth and not yet come to the age of twenty, should present themselves a week later for the tests to which His Majesty desired to put them, the first of which was to be a running race. Whereat the people rejoiced, for they wished to be ruled by one to whom they could look up, and running was much esteemed in that country.

On the appointed day the excitement was great. All along the course, which was once round the castle, large crowds were massed, and at the finishing point the King and Queen themselves were seated in a specially erected pavilion. And to this pavilion the competitors were brought to be introduced to their Majesties. And there were nine young nobles, well-built, and handsome, and (it was thought) intelligent, who were competitors. And there was also one Rabbit.

The Chancellor had first noticed the Rabbit when he was lining up the competitors, pinning numbers on their backs so that the people should identify them, and giving them such instructions as seemed necessary to him. "Now, now, be off with you," he had said. "Competitors only, this way." And he had made a motion of impatient dismissal with his foot.

"I *am* a competitor," said the Rabbit. "And I don't think it is usual," he added with dignity, "for the starter to kick one of the competitors just at the beginning of an important foot-race. It looks like favouritism."

"You can't be a competitor," laughed all the young nobles.

"Why not? Read the rules."

The Chancellor, feeling rather hot suddenly, read the rules. The Rabbit was certainly under twenty; he had a pedigree which showed that he was of the highest birth; and——

"And," said the Rabbit, "I am ambitious to be appointed the

King's successor. Those were all the conditions. Now let's get on with the race."

But first came the introduction to the King. One by one the competitors came up . . . and at the end——

"This," said the Chancellor, as airily as he could, "is Rabbit."

Rabbit bowed in the most graceful manner possible; first to the King and then to the Queen. But the King



only stared at him. Then he turned to the Chancellor.

"Well?"

The Chancellor shrugged his shoulders.

"His entry does not appear to lack validity," he said.

"He means, your Majesty, that it is all right," explained Rabbit.

The King laughed suddenly. "Go on," he said. "We can always have a race for a new Chancellor afterwards."

So the race was started. And the young Lord Calomel was much cheered on coming in second; not only by their Majesties, but also by Rabbit, who had finished the course some time before, and was now lounging in the Royal Pavilion.

"A very good style, your Majesty," said Rabbit, turning to the King. "Altogether he seems to be a most promising youth."

"Most," said the King grimly. "So much so that I do not propose to trouble the rest of the competitors. The next test shall take place between you and him."

"Not racing again, please, your Majesty. That would hardly be fair to his lordship."

"No, not racing; fighting."

"Ah! What sort of fighting?"

"With swords," said the King.

"I am a little rusty with swords, but I daresay in a day or two——"

"It will be now," said the King.

"You mean, your Majesty, as soon as Lord Calomel has recovered his breath?"

The King answered nothing, but turned to his Chancellor.

"Tell the young Lord Calomel that in half an hour I desire him to fight with this Rabbit——"

"The young Lord Rabbit," murmured the other competitor to the Chancellor.

"To fight with him for my kingdom."

"*And borrow me a sword, will you?*" said Rabbit.

"Quite a small one. I don't want to hurt him."

So, half an hour later, on a level patch of grass in front of the pavilion, the fight began. It was a short, but exciting, struggle. Calomel, whirling his long sword in his strong right arm, dashed upon Rabbit, and Rabbit, carrying his short sword in his teeth, dodged between Calomel's legs and brought him toppling. And when it was seen that the young Lord rose from the ground with a broken arm, and that with the utmost gallantry he had now taken his sword in his left hand, the people cheered. And Rabbit, dropping his sword for a moment, cheered too; and then he picked it up and got it entangled in his adversary's legs again, so that again the young Lord Calomel crashed to the ground, this time with a sprained ankle. And there he lay.

Rabbit trotted into the Royal Pavilion, and dropped his sword in the Chancellor's lap.

"Thank you so much," he said. "Have I won?"

And the King frowned and pulled at his beard.

"There are other tests," he muttered.

But what were they to be? It was plain that Lord Calomel was in no condition for another physical test. What, then, of an intellectual test?

"After all," said the King to the Queen that night, "intelligence is a quality not without value to a ruler."

"Is it?" asked the Queen doubtfully.



Calomel dashed upon Rabbit.

"I have found it so," said the King, a little haughtily.

"Oh," said the Queen.

"There is a riddle, of which my father was fond, the answer to which has never been revealed save to the Royal House. We might make this the final test between them."

"What is the riddle?"

"I fancy it goes like this." He thought for a moment, and then recited it, beating time with his hand.

"My *first* I do for your delight,
Although 'tis neither black nor white.
My *second* looks the other way,
Yet always goes to bed by day.
My *whole* can fly, and climb a tree,
And sometimes swims upon the sea."

"What is the answer?" asked the Queen.

"As far as I remember," said His Majesty, "it is either *Dormouse* or *Raspberry*."

"*'Dormouse'* doesn't make sense," objected the Queen.

"Neither does *'raspberry,'*" pointed out the King.

"Then how can they guess it?"

"They can't. But my idea is that young Calomel should be secretly told beforehand what the answer is, so that he may win the competition."

"Is that fair?" asked the Queen doubtfully.

"Yes," said the King. "Certainly. Or I wouldn't have suggested it."

So it was duly announced by the Chancellor that the final test between the young Lord Calomel and Rabbit would be the solving of an ancient riddle-me-ree, which

in the past had baffled all save those of Royal blood. Copies of the riddle had been sent to the competitors, and in a week from that day they would be called upon to give their answers before their Majesties and the full Court. And with Lord Calomel's copy went a message, which said this:

"From a Friend. The answer is Dormouse. BURN THIS."

The day came round; and Calomel and Rabbit were brought before their Majesties; and they bowed to their Majesties, and were ordered to be seated, for Calomel's ankle was still painful to him. And when the Chancellor had called for silence, the King addressed those present, explaining the conditions of the test to them.

"And the answer to the riddle," he said, "is in this sealed paper, which I now hand to my Chancellor, in order that he shall open it, as soon as the competitors have told us what they know of the matter."

The people, being uncertain what else to do, cheered slightly.

"I will ask Lord Calomel first," His Majesty went on. He looked at his lordship, and his lordship nodded slightly. And Rabbit, noticing that nod, smiled suddenly to himself.

"Lord Calomel," said the King, "what do you consider to be the best answer to this riddle-me-ree?"

The young Lord Calomel tried to look very wise, and he said:

"There are many possible answers to this riddle-me-ree, but the best answer seems to me to be *Dormouse*."

"Let someone take a note of that answer," said the King; whereupon the Chief Secretary wrote down: "LORD CALOMEL—*Dormouse*."

"Now," said the King to Rabbit, "what suggestion have you to make in this matter?"

Rabbit, who had spent an anxious week inventing answers each more impossible than the last, looked down modestly.

"Well?" said the King.

"Your Majesty," said Rabbit with some apparent hesitation, "I have a great respect for the intelligence of the young Lord Calomel, but I think that in this matter he is mistaken. The answer is not, as he suggests, *wood-louse*, but *dormouse*."

"I said '*dormouse*,'" cried Calomel indignantly.

"I thought you said '*wood-louse*,'" said Rabbit in surprise.

"He certainly said '*dormouse*,'" said the King coldly.

"'*Wood-louse*,' I *think*," said Rabbit.

"Lord Calomel—'*Dormouse*'" read out the Chief Secretary.

"There you are," said Calomel. "I did say '*dormouse*.'"

"My apologies," said Rabbit, with a bow. "Then we are both right, for *dormouse* it certainly is."

The Chancellor broke open the sealed paper, and to the amazement of nearly all present read out "*Dormouse*."

"Apparently, your Majesty," he said in some surprise, "they are both equally correct."

The King scowled. In some way, which he didn't quite understand, he had been tricked.

"May I suggest, your Majesty," the Chancellor went on, "that they be asked now some question of a different order,

such as can be answered, after not more than a few minutes' thought, here in your Majesty's presence. Some problem in the higher mathematics, for instance, such as might be profitable for a future King to know."

"What question?" asked His Majesty, a little nervously.

"Well, as an example—what is seven times six?" And, behind his hand, he whispered to the King, "Forty-two."

Not a muscle of the King's face moved, but he looked thoughtfully at the Lord Calomel. Supposing his lordship did not know!

"Well?" he said reluctantly. "What is the answer?"

The young Lord Calomel thought for some time, and then said, "Fifty-four."

"And you?" said the King to Rabbit.

Rabbit wondered what to say. As long as he gave the same answers as Calomel, he could not lose in the encounter, yet in this case "Forty-two" was the right answer. But the King, who could do no wrong, even in arithmetic might decide, for the purposes of the competition, that "fifty-four" was an answer more becoming to the future ruler of the country. Was it, then, safe to say "Forty-two"?

"Your Majesty," he said, "there are several possible answers to this extraordinarily novel conundrum. At first sight the obvious solution would appear to be 'forty-two.' The objection to this solution is that it lacks originality. I have long felt that a progressive country such as ours might well strike out a new line in the matter.



Let us agree that in future seven sixes are fifty-four. In that case the answer, as Lord Calomel has pointed out, *is* 'fifty-four.' But if your Majesty would prefer to cling to the old style of counting, then your Majesty and your Majesty's Chancellor would make the answer 'forty-two.'"

After saying which, Rabbit bowed gracefully, both to their Majesties and to his opponent, and sat down again.

The King scratched his head in a puzzled sort of way.

"The correct answer," he said, "is, or will be in the future, 'fifty-four.'"

"Make a note of that," whispered the Chancellor to the Chief Secretary.

"Lord Calomel guessed this at his first attempt; Rabbit at his second attempt. I therefore declare Lord Calomel the winner."

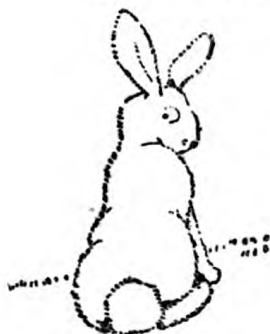
"Shame!" said Rabbit.

"Who said that?" cried the King furiously.

Rabbit looked over his shoulder, with the object of identifying the culprit, but was apparently unsuccessful.

"However," went on the King, "in order that there should be no doubt in the minds of my people as to the absolute fairness with which this competition is being conducted, there will be one further test. It happens that a King is often called upon to make speeches and exhortations to his people, and for this purpose the ability to stand evenly upon two legs for a considerable length of time is of much value to him. The next test, therefore, will be——"

But at this point Lord Calomel cleared his throat so loudly that the King had to stop and listen to him.



"Quite so," said the King. "The next test, therefore, will be held in a month's time, when his lordship's ankle is healed, and it will be a test to see who can balance himself longest upon two legs only."

Rabbit lolloped back to his home in the wood, pondering deeply.

Now there was an enchanter who lived in the wood, a man of many magical gifts. He could (it was averred by the countryside) extract coloured ribbons from his mouth, cook plum-puddings in a hat, and produce as many as ten silk handkerchiefs, knotted together, from a twist of paper. And that night, after a simple dinner of salad, Rabbit called upon him.

"Can you," he said, "turn a rabbit into a man?"

The enchanter considered this carefully.

"I can," he said at last, "turn a plum-pudding into a rabbit."

"That," said Rabbit, "to be quite frank, would not be a helpful operation."

"I can turn almost anything into a rabbit," said the enchanter with growing enthusiasm. "In fact, I like doing it."

Then Rabbit had an idea.

"Can you turn a man into a rabbit?"

"I did once. At least I turned a baby into a baby rabbit."

"When was that?"



"Eighteen years ago. At the court of King Nicodemus. I was giving an exhibition of my powers to him and his good Queen. I asked one of the company to lend me a baby, never thinking for a moment that—— The young Prince was handed up. I put a red silk handkerchief over him, and waved my hands. Then I took the handkerchief away. . . . The Queen was very much distressed. I tried everything I could, but it was useless. The King was most generous about it. He said that I could keep the rabbit. I carried it about with me for some weeks, but one day it escaped. Dear, dear!" He wiped his eyes gently with a red silk handkerchief.

"Most interesting," said Rabbit. "Well, this is what I want you to do." And they discussed the matter from the beginning.

A month later the great Standing Competition was to take place. When all was ready, the King rose to make his opening remarks.

"We are now," he began, "to make one of the most interesting tests between our two candidates for the throne. At the word 'Go!' they will——" And then he stopped suddenly. "Why, what's this?" he said, putting on his spectacles. "Where is the young Lord Calomel? And what is that second rabbit doing? There was no need to bring your brother," he added severely to Rabbit.

"I am Lord Calomel," said the second rabbit meekly.

"Oh!" said the King.

"Go!" said the Chancellor, who was a little deaf.

Rabbit, who had been practising for a month, jumped on his back paws and remained there. Lord Calomel, who

had no practice at all, remained on all fours. In the crowd at the back the enchanter chuckled to himself.

"How long do I stay like this?" asked Rabbit.

"This is all very awkward and distressing," said the King.

"May I get down?" said Rabbit.

"There is no doubt that the Rabbit has won," said the Chancellor.

"Which rabbit?" cried the King crossly. "They're both rabbits."

"The one with the white spots behind the ears," said Rabbit helpfully. "May I get down?"

There was a sudden cry from the back of the hall.

"Your Majesty?"

"Well, well, what is it?"

The enchanter pushed his way forward.

"May I look, your Majesty?" he said in a trembling voice. "White spots behind the ears? Dear, dear! Allow me!" He seized Rabbit's ears, and bent them this way and that.

"Ow!" said Rabbit.

"It is! Your Majesty, it is!"

"Is what?"

"The son of the late King Nicodemus, whose country is now joined to your own. Prince Silvio."

"Quite so," said Rabbit airily, hiding his surprise. "Didn't any of you recognize me?"

"Nicodemus only had one son," said the Chancellor, "and he died as a baby."

"Not died," said the enchanter, and forthwith explained the whole sad story.

"I see," said the King, when the story was ended. "But of course that is neither here nor there. A competition like this must be conducted with absolute impartiality." He turned to the Chancellor. "Which of them won that last test?"

"Prince Silvio," said the Chancellor.

"Then, my dear Prince Silvio——"

"One moment," interrupted the enchanter excitedly. "I've just thought of the words. I *knew* there were some words you had to say."

He threw his red silk handkerchief over Rabbit, and cried "Hey presto!"

And the handkerchief rose and rose and rose. . . .

And there was Prince Silvio!

You can imagine how loudly the people cheered. But the King appeared not to notice that anything surprising had happened.

"Then, my dear Prince Silvio," he went on, "as the winner of this most interesting series of contests, you are appointed successor to our throne."

"Your Majesty," said Silvio, "this is too much." And he turned to the enchanter and said, "May I borrow your handkerchief for a moment? My emotion has overcome me."

So on the following day, Prince Rabbit was duly proclaimed heir to the throne before all the people. But not until the ceremony was over did he return the enchanter's red handkerchief.

"And now," he said to the enchanter, "you may restore Lord Calomel to his proper shape."

And the enchanter placed his handkerchief on Lord

Calomel's head, and said "Hey presto!" and Lord Calomel stretched himself and said "Thanks very much." But he said it rather coldly, as if he were not really very grateful.

So they all lived happily for a long time. And Prince Rabbit married the most beautiful Princess of those parts; and when a son was born to them there was much feasting and jollification. And the King gave a great party, whereat minstrels, tumblers, jugglers and suchlike were present in large quantities to give pleasure to the company. But in spite of a suggestion made by the Princess, the enchanter was not present.

"But I hear he is so clever," said the Princess to her husband.

"He has many amusing inventions," replied the Prince, "but some of them are not in the best of taste."

"Very well, dear," said the Princess.

AUTUMN WIND

By *MARIAN ALLEN*

THE Autumn Wind I hear it say,
“Over the hills and far away—
The folded hills that are hedged and green
Where warm little villages huddle between—
Where peeps the spire of a half-hid town—
Over the hills that are furrowed and brown
To the distant hills that are blue and thin
Where the land must end and the sea begin—
Light as a leaf from the wind-blown tree—
Over the hills to the dancing sea—
Chasing your shadow across the sun—
Up little Playfellow! Up and run!”



SINGING FEVER

By MABEL MARLOWE

ONE midsummer eve, Gollop the gnome went into his little house, shut the door, and began to sing. He began to sing softly at first, as if he had a baby in a cradle; but after a while his song grew louder, and louder, and louder still.

"Stop that noise, Gollop," shouted the other gnomes, standing outside in the lane.

"I can't!" answered Gollop, and he went on singing more lustily than ever. (The worst of it was, his voice was cracked.)

Then the other gnomes began to frown and to grumble and to stop their ears. They banged on Gollop's door, and shouted out, "Stop that noise, Gollop!"

"I've tried, but I can't," replied Gollop, and he drew a long breath and began on his eighteenth song. Oh, such a noise he made! Then all the lady gnomes went into their houses and shut the doors and went to bed and refused to get up.

But Gollop went on singing. All through the night he sang, and every moment the sound of it grew louder. When morning came all the other gnomes had head-ache. All of them had ear-ache, and all of them were as vexed as they could be. They went to milk the cows, but the cows would give no milk. They went to collect the eggs, but the hens had laid none.

Then the gnomes grew most annoyed with Gollop. They banged on his door with their fists and they said,

"Oh, Gollop, for goodness' sake stop that noise. The cows have gone dry and the hens have laid no eggs, and our wives have gone under the bedclothes and refused to get up. And all through you. Stop that noise at once!"

But Gollop answered, "Oh, friends, I am very sorry, but I simply can't stop singing. I have got singing fever."

Then all the gnomes looked very startled and very worried in their minds, and one of them said, "Oh, Gollop, if you really have got singing fever I suppose you must sing. But you need not do it here, right in the middle of the village. Get up. Put on your hat and go right away. Go miles away, where we cannot hear you."

"It might be catching!" said the other gnomes, looking fearfully at one another.

Gollop the gnome opened his door and strode out, singing all the time. Up the village street he went, and across the open moor, and away through the woodlands—and away—and away. The sound of his singing grew softer and softer, and at last faded altogether.

Then the wives got up, and the cows began to moo. The hens each laid an egg, and all the village was at peace.

Gollop the gnome went singing on his way, and by evening he was twenty miles away from home, right on the top of a pine-covered hill. A little man lived here, in a house made of pine-trees, and when he heard Gollop coming he called out, "Stop that noise!"

"I can't!" said Gollop.

"Why not?"

"Because I've got singing fever."

"Dear me, that is very serious," said the little man.

"Have you tried a cure?"



From
Punch.

"I didn't know there was a cure," said Gollop (singing all the time).

"Oh yes, there is a cure. You simply have to do some fiddling. Then all the fever goes out of your voice into the fiddle."

"I haven't got a fiddle," said Gollop.

"Never mind. I will lend you mine. But be sure you don't lose it," said the little man, and he went into his house and fetched a little fiddle and a little bow.

"There! That will cure your singing fever," he said.

Gollop put out his hand and took the fiddle, and immediately he touched it his singing stopped.

"Keep it for three days," said the little man, "and be sure you don't lose it."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Gollop, and he kissed the little man on both cheeks. Then he turned and ran down the hill. Very quickly he hurried through the woodland and back across the moor, and he ran into the village just as the gnomes were saying "Good-night."

"Hallo, Gollop! Are you cured?" they said. And when he told them that he was cured they all shook hands with him, and patted him on the back and called him "mate."

But no sooner had Gollop gone into his house and closed the door than a weird noise was heard—a thin, screamy kind of noise, with a grunt here and there, and then a screech, and then a long, long wail.

"Stop treading on the dog, Gollop!" shouted the gnomes.

"I'm not treading on the dog," replied Gollop.

"Stop teasing the cat!"

"I'm not teasing the cat."

"Well, whatever you are doing, stop it! Stop it at once!"

"I can't!" cried poor Gollop. "I've tried, but I can't. I do believe I've got fiddle fever!"

Then all the other gnomes grew most annoyed with poor Gollop. They banged on his door with their fists, and they said:

"Oh, Gollop, stop that noise at once! It is worse than singing fever. It is making all the pigs lie on their backs with their feet in the air. Open this door at once!"

So Gollop opened the door. Then one gnome said, "If he has no fiddle he can't have fiddle fever. Take his fiddle away!" So they took his fiddle away from him. One gnome gave it to another. "Pass it on," he said. That gnome gave it to another. "Pass it on," he said. And the fiddle was passed on and on and on, all the way round the world.

"There! That's soon settled! That has cured you of fiddle fever," said the gnomes, feeling very satisfied with themselves.

"Yes," replied Gollop sadly. "Yes, that is true. BUT—but—I do believe the singing fever is coming back again."

Then he began to sing once more, and the noise of it was like the shaking of pebbles in a can.

"Quick! Give him back his fiddle," cried the gnomes. But the fiddle was gone.

And Gollop went on singing.

Then all the gnomes began to get into a state, and they said, "Oh, Gollop, if you've got singing fever we suppose you must sing. But please don't do it here. Our wives will go under the bedclothes and refuse to get up. The cows

will go dry, and the hens will not lay, and all the pigs will lie on their backs with their feet up in the air. So please go away. Go miles away, where we cannot hear you."

So Gollop the gnome came out, singing all the time. Along the village street he went, all in the glistening starlight. He crossed the open moor, and went through the shadowy woodlands, away and away. The sound of his singing grew softer and softer, and at last faded altogether.

Through the dark night Gollop travelled, singing all the way, and at dawn he came to the hill where the pines grew.

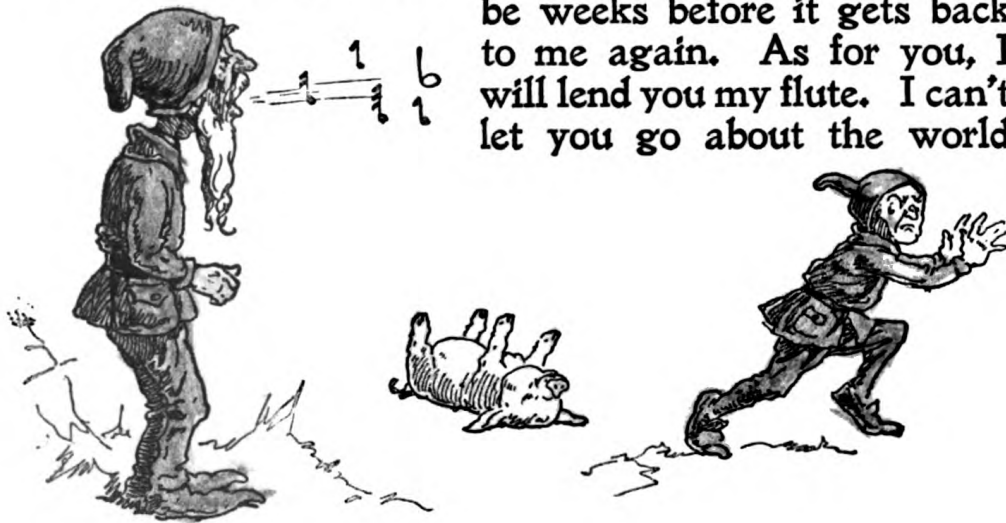
The little old man was just getting up. He put his head out of the window and shouted, "Stop that noise!"

"I can't! I've got singing fever!" said Gollop.

"What? Again? I thought I cured you! What have you done with my fiddle?"

"It has gone round the world!"

"How very tiresome!" said the little old man. "It might be weeks before it gets back to me again. As for you, I will lend you my flute. I can't let you go about the world



making that noise. I will lend you my flute, but be sure you don't lose it."

"Will it cure my singing fever?" asked Gollop the gnome.

"Yes, to be sure! But be sure you don't lose it." Then the little old man drew in his head from the window, and in a few moments he came out at the door, bringing a tortoise-shell flute, with silver stops to it. Gollop put out his hand and took the flute, and immediately he touched it his singing stopped.

Then Gollop turned and ran down the hill. Quickly he sped through the woodlands and across the moor, and ran into the village just as the gnomes were going off to work.

"Hallo, Gollop! Are you cured?" they said. And when he said "Yes" they all shook hands with him once more, and patted him on the back and called him "pal."

But no sooner had Gollop got into his house and closed the door, than an eerie, wailing sound was heard. Then there came a sound like a choke, and then a long, long squeal.

"Stop hurting the pig, Gollop!" cried the gnomes.

"I'm not touching the pig."

"Stop teasing the parrot!"

"I'm not touching the parrot."

"Well, whatever you are doing, stop it at once!"

"I can't!" cried poor Gollop. "I've tried, but I can't. I do believe I've got flute fever!"

Then all the gnomes grew most dreadfully annoyed with Gollop. They knocked on his door with their sticks, and they said:



Gollop turned and ran down the hill.

"Oh, Gollop, stop that noise at once! It is worse than singing fever. It is worse than fiddle fever. It is making the goat stand on his hind legs like a circus pony. Open this door at once!"

So Gollop opened the door. Then one gnome said, "If he has no flute he cannot have flute fever. Take his flute away." So they took his flute away from him. One gnome gave it to another. "Pass it on," he said. That gnome gave it to another. "Pass it on," he said. And the flute was passed on and on and on, all the way round the world.

"There! That's settled! That has soon cured you of flute fever," said the gnomes, feeling very proud and satisfied with themselves.

"Yes," replied Gollop sadly. "Yes, dear friends, that is true. But—but—I'm afraid the singing fever is coming back again."

Then he began to sing.

"Give him back his flute," cried the gnomes, tearing at their hair. But the flute was gone.

Then the gnomes began to get into a fluster, and they said, "Oh, Gollop, if you really have got singing fever we suppose you must sing. But pray don't do it here. Our wives will go to bed, and the hens will refuse to lay, and all the cows in the meadows will go dry. So please go away. Go a long way away. Go miles away, where we can't hear you."

"It's all very fine! I'm getting tired," said Gollop. But he went away all the same, singing as he went. The sun was shining as he passed through the village. Cocks were crowing in the farmyards and larks were singing in the sky.

On through the awakening woodland Gollop travelled, and at last he reached the little house on the hill-top once more.

The little old man was sitting on a gate, swinging idly to and fro.

"Stop that noise!" he cried.

"I can't! I've got singing fever!" replied Gollop.

"What? Again? I thought I cured you! What have you done with my flute?"

"It has gone round the world."

"How very tiresome! It might be weeks before it gets back to me again. As for you, I will lend you my musical box. I can't let you go about the world making that terrible noise. I will lend you my musical box. But be sure you don't lose it."

Then the little old man felt in his coat pocket, and took out a small, round musical box, with a picture on the top of it and a handle in the middle.

"Take it, and be sure you don't lose it," he said. So Gollop took the musical box into his hand, and immediately he touched it the singing stopped.

"Oh, thank you," said Gollop, and he turned and ran down the hill. All through the sunny afternoon he trudged homewards, and he reached the village just as the gnomes were coming back from work.

"Hallo, Gollop! Are you cured?" they said, and when he answered "Yes" they patted him on the back and shook hands with him and called him "chum."

But no sooner had Gollop got into his house and closed the door, than a faint, tinkly, fairy-like sound came floating through the window. It was like silver bells shaking in

the wind. It was like the laughter of fairies. It was sweeter than choir boys singing in the little gnome choir.

"Have you got a fairy in there?" asked the gnomes.

"No, dear friends. But I'm afraid I've got musical-box fever!" said Gollop.

Then the gnomes looked at one another with big, slow smiles, and delightful twinklings of merry eyes.

"If you've got musical-box fever," they said, "we all think you had better keep it."

And he did.



THE RAM AND THE LEOPARD

By VALERY CARRICK

AN AFRICAN TALE

ONCE upon a time a ram thought he would build himself a house in the forest. So he went into the forest and made a clearing.

"That's done now," he said; "to-morrow I'll have a rest, and after that I'll start building my house."

Then he went back to his home.

But at the same time a leopard thought HE would build himself a house in the forest. So he went there and began to look for a likely place, when suddenly he saw that a clearing had already been made, as though on purpose for a house to be built there.

"That's splendid!" he thought. "I'll begin to build my house here!"

And he started dragging sticks and stakes and logs along; he worked all day, and got very tired, and then he said:

"Well, the beginning is always the hardest part! To-morrow I'll rest, and then start work again!"

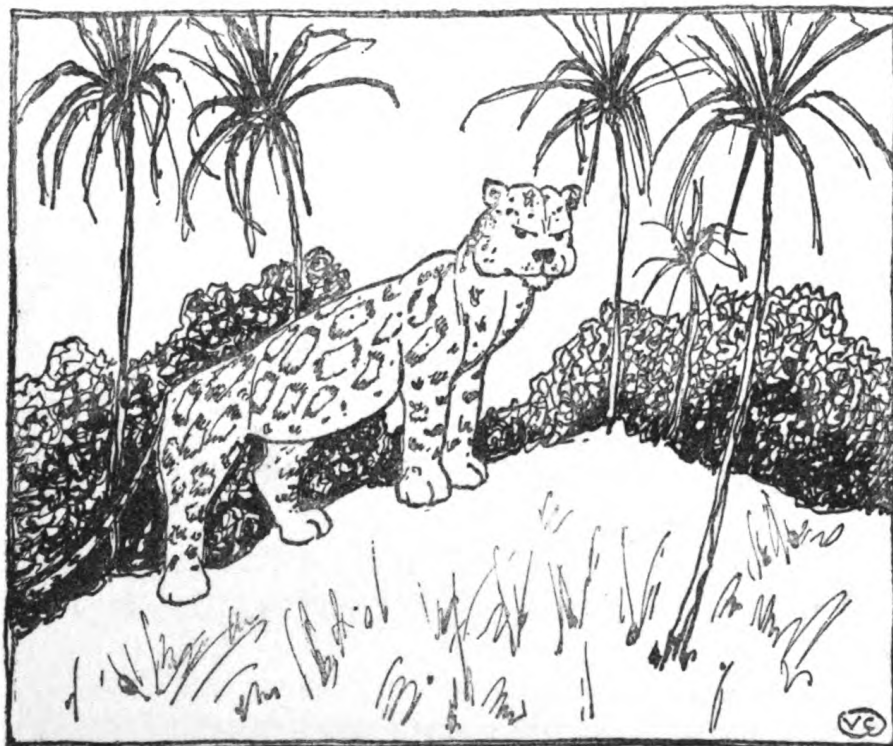
The next day the ram came along, and saw all the sticks and stakes and logs gathered there: all he had to do was to put them together! And he was very much surprised, and he thought:

"This must be the fairies helping me!"

And then he began putting the walls up. And he got half way, and then felt very tired, so he went away to rest.

The next day the leopard came along again, and saw that the walls had been half built, and he thought:

"There, isn't that splendid! I had a rest yesterday, and the fairies meantime helped me!"



And he started to work and finished building the walls, and got very tired, and thought:

"That's all right! All to-morrow I'll rest, and then I'll finish it off!"

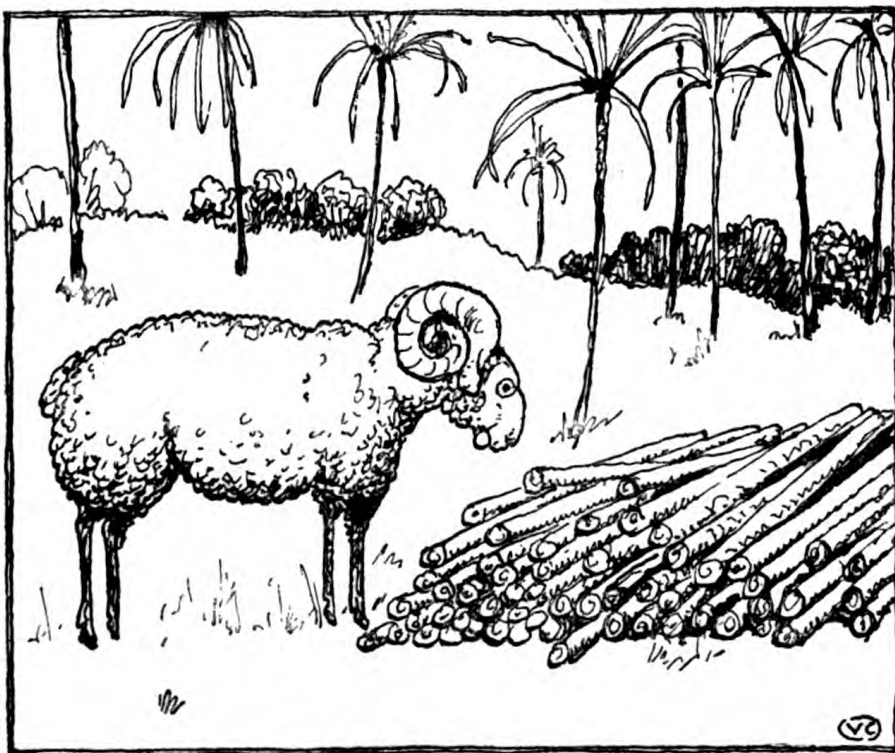
The next day the ram came along, and saw that it was

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all done but for the roof. And he set to work and put the roof on. Then he thought:

"Well, to-morrow I'll just have a good rest, and then I can start moving in!"

The next day the leopard came along again, and when he saw what had happened he thought:



"There now, would you believe it, the work's finished! The roof is on! To-morrow I'll move in!"

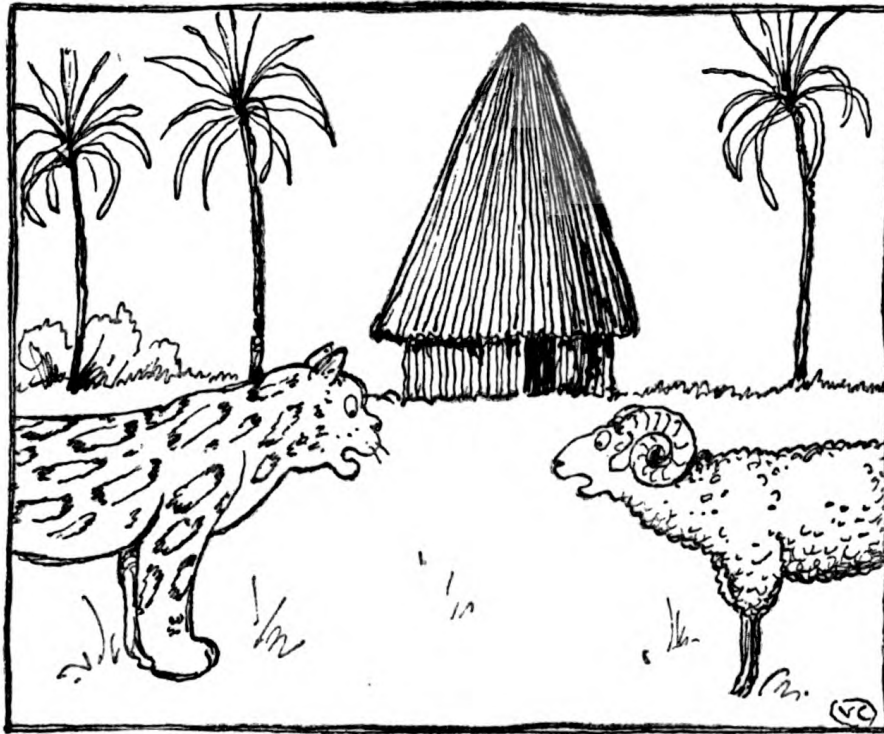
The next day the ram started moving into his new house, and the leopard also started moving into HIS new house, and they both came along and met, and the ram said:

"This house is for ME to live in! I built it, and the fairies helped me!"

But the leopard said:

"No! This house is for ME to live in! It was I who built it, and it was ME whom the fairies helped!"

And they argued about it for a long time, and couldn't



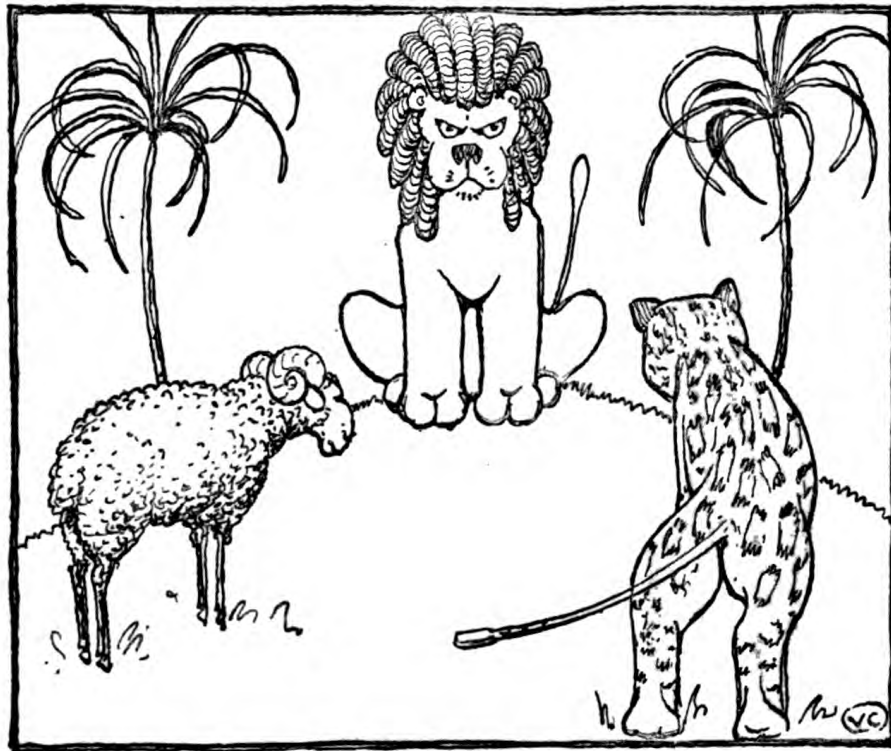
settle who was to live in the house, or whom the fairies had helped. And in the end they went for judgment to the lion, and said to him:

"Please will YOU decide the question: Who built the house, whom did the fairies help, and who is to live in it?"

And the lion replied:

"Both of you built the house, and the fairies helped you both, and so both of you go and live in it, and don't quarrel!"

So both the leopard and the ram started living in the house, and they got on all right and didn't quarrel. The



leopard would go off hunting, bring back his prey, and eat it. And the ram just kept on walking about round the house, nibbling the grass and getting quite satisfied with that. And the leopard began to wonder how it was: the ram had no sharp teeth, had no claws, and besides that he was lazy, so how did he manage to get plenty to eat and

keep fat? How did HE catch his prey? So he asked him one day, and said:

"How do YOU catch your prey, Mr. Ram?"

And the ram answered:

"How do I catch my prey? First of all you show me how YOU catch your prey!"

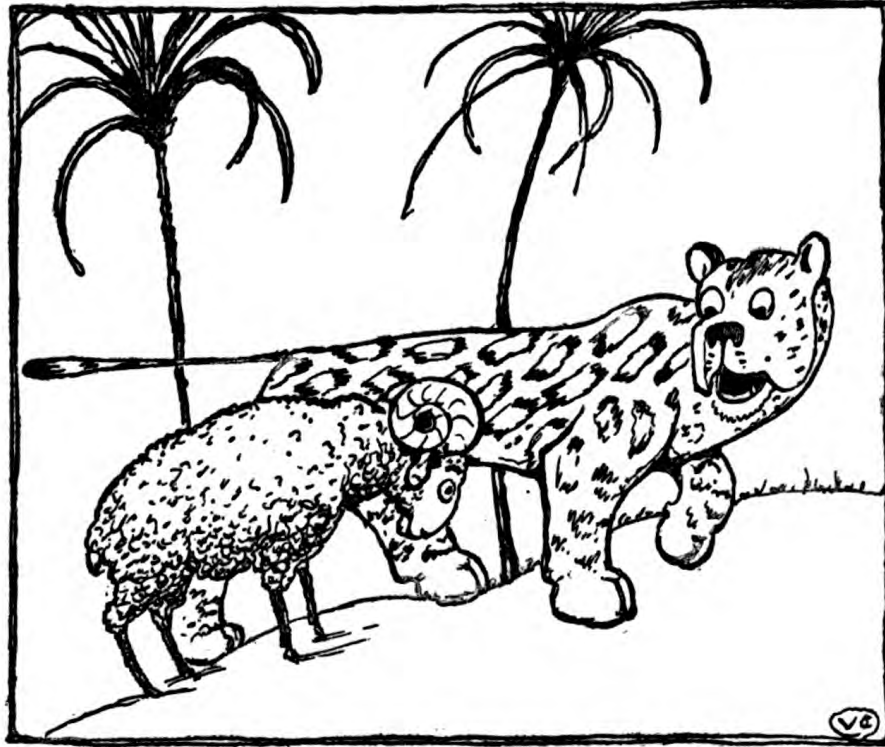


Then the leopard put a log of wood on the ground, and began to approach it as if he were hunting: first he'd come up from one side, crouch down on the earth and creep along; then he'd come up from the other side, crouch down on the earth and creep along. Then all at once he'd spring right on to the log and start gnawing it with his teeth, hit-

ting it with his paws, and tearing it with his claws. And the ram watched him, and then said:

"Well, now I'll show you how I catch my prey."

And he went and stood in front of the log, and then began to back. And he backed and backed, till all at once he



ran forward at the log and butted it hard with his horns, and the log simply went spinning away like a top. So the leopard saw that the ram was very strong, and he thought to himself:

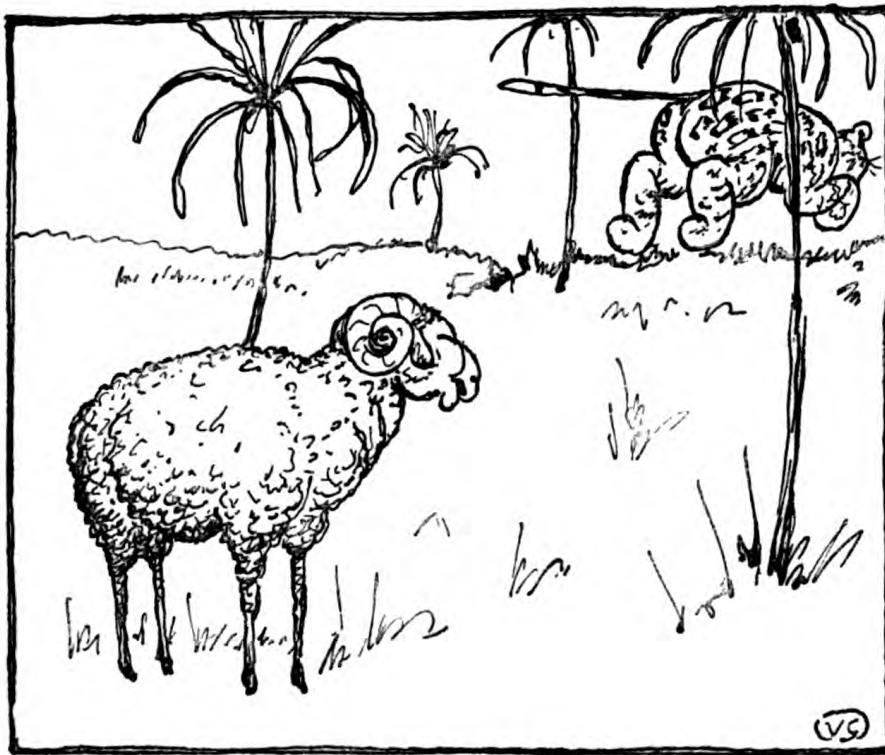
"The ram's a dangerous beast! I must be on the lookout, or he'll do for me. But there's one good thing: I know he's got to go back before he comes forward!"

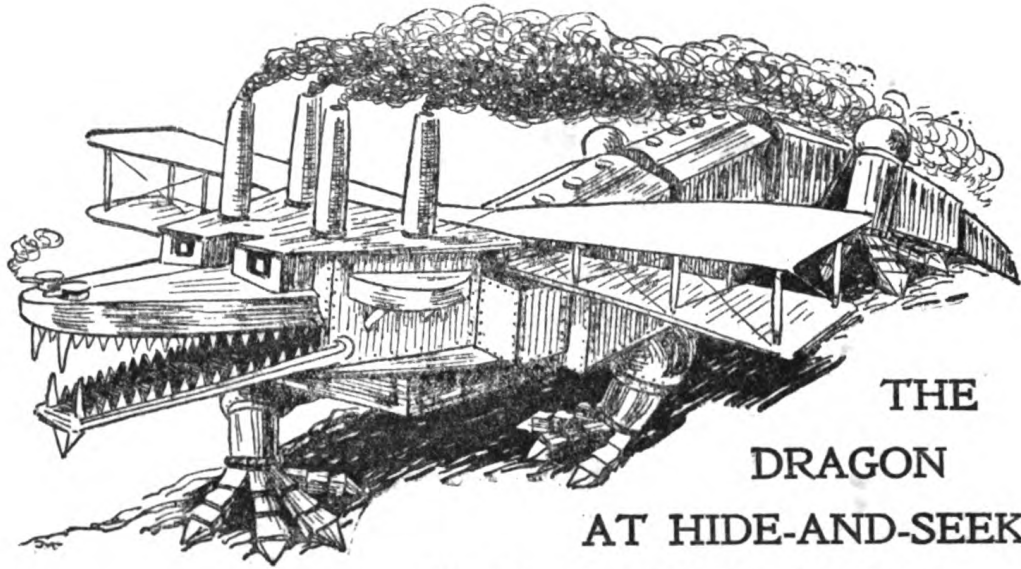
And after that they went on living happily, the leopard going off hunting and bringing back his prey, and the ram walking round the house and nibbling the grass. But the leopard kept a sharp look-out and watched to see if the ram hadn't started backing.

Then came the rains, and the earth got wet and slippery. And one day the leopard and the ram were standing together when suddenly the ram slipped, and he slipped so much that he went quite a long way back. And when the leopard saw this he got a terrible fright, and thought:

"Oh dear, oh dear! My end has come!"

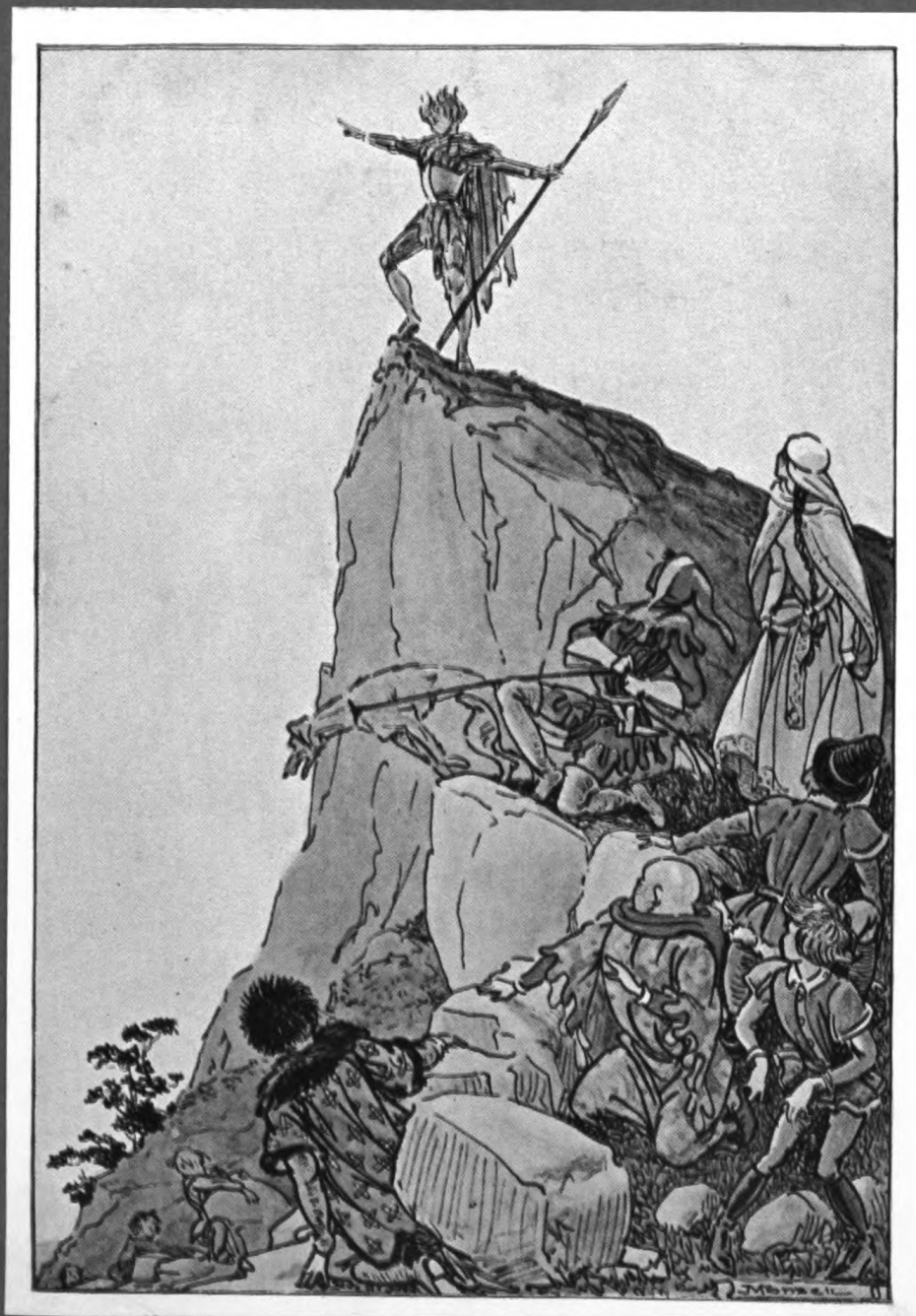
And with that he dashed off into the forest. And ever since then the ram has been sole master of the house.



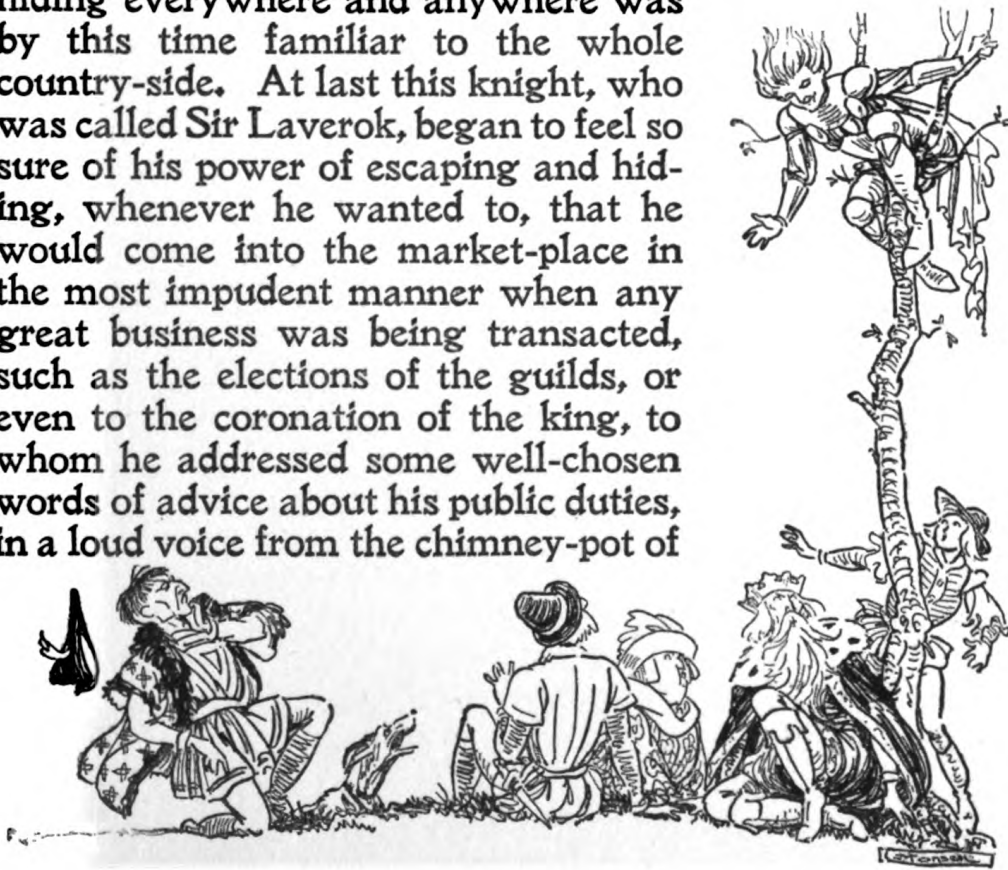


By G. K. CHESTERTON

ONCE upon a time there was a knight who was an outlaw, that is a man hiding from the king and everybody else; and one who lived so wild and lawless a life, in being hunted from one hiding-place to another, that he had great difficulty in going to church every Sunday. Although his ordinary way of life was full of fighting, and burning, and breaking down doors, and therefore looked a little careless, he had been very carefully brought up, and it was obviously a very serious thing that he should be late for church. But he was so clever and daring in his way of getting from one place to another without being caught, that he generally managed it somehow. And it was often a considerable disturbance to the congregation when he came with a great crash flying in through the big stained-glass window and smashing it to atoms, having been patiently hanging on a gargoyle outside for half an hour; or, when he dropped suddenly out of the belfry, where he



had been hiding in one of the big bells, and alighted almost on the heads of the worshippers. Nor were they better pleased when he preferred to dig a hole in the churchyard and crawl under the church-wall, coming up suddenly under a lifted paving-stone in the middle of the nave or the chancel. They were too well-behaved, of course, to notice the incident during the service; and the more just among them admitted that even outlaws must get to church somehow; but it caused a certain amount of talk in the town, and the history of the knight and his wonderful way of hiding everywhere and anywhere was by this time familiar to the whole country-side. At last this knight, who was called Sir Laverok, began to feel so sure of his power of escaping and hiding, whenever he wanted to, that he would come into the market-place in the most impudent manner when any great business was being transacted, such as the elections of the guilds, or even to the coronation of the king, to whom he addressed some well-chosen words of advice about his public duties, in a loud voice from the chimney-pot of



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an adjoining house. Often when the king and his lords were out hunting, or even when they were in camp during a great war, they would look up and see Sir Laverok perched like a bird on a tree above their heads, and ever ready with friendly counsels and almost fatherly good wishes. But though they pursued him with emotions of uninterrupted rage, lasting over several months, they were never able to discover what were the holes and corners in which he hid himself. They were forced to admit that his talent for disappearing into undiscovered places was of the highest order, and that in a children's game of Hide-and-Seek he would have covered himself with everlasting glory; but they all felt that a fugitive from justice should be strictly forbidden to cultivate genius of this kind.

Now it was just about this time that there fell upon the whole of that country an enormous calamity far worse than any war or pestilence. It was of a kind which we have very few chances of experiencing nowadays; though in the other matter of wars and diseases our opportunities are still wide and varied. There had appeared in the wilderness, to the north of that country, a monster of huge size and horrible habits and disposition; a monster who might have been called for the sake of simplicity, a dragon, only he had feet like an elephant, but a hundred times bigger, with which he used to stamp and crush everything to a flat and fine paste before he licked it up with a tongue as long and large as the Great Sea Serpent; and his great jaws opened wide like a whale's, only that they could have swallowed a shoal of whales as if they were whitebait. No weapons or missiles seemed to be of any avail against him; for his skin was plated with iron of incredible thickness.

Indeed, some declared that he was entirely composed of iron, and that he had been made out of that material by a magician who lived beyond the wilderness, where such crafts and spells were more seriously studied. Indeed, it was hinted by some that the land of the magicians was in every way in advance of their own, and well worthy of emulation; and that if anyone objected that this marvellous machinery had no apparent effect except in killing people and destroying beautiful things, he should be rebuked as one lacking in enterprise and a larger outlook upon the future. But those who said this, commonly said it before they had actually met the new animal; and it was noticed that after meeting him they seldom uttered these thoughts, or, indeed, any other.

The monster may have been made of iron, and his nerves and muscles may have been, as some said, made like an arrangement of wheels and wires, but he was most unmistakably alive; and proved it by having a hearty appetite and an evident enjoyment of life. He trampled and devoured first, all the fortifications of the frontier, and then the castles and the larger towns of the interior; and by the time that he was marching towards the capital, the king and his courtiers were all climbing to the tops of towers, and everybody else to the tops of trees. These precautions proved inadequate in practical experience; in very practical experience. So long as the monster could be seen twenty miles away like a marching mountain, already fantastic in outline, but still blue or purple with distance, and there was no other sign of him except a slight shaking of the houses as in a mild earthquake, these conjectures and expedients could be debated copiously, if not always

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calmly. But when the creature came near enough for his habits to be closely studied, it was clear that he could tread down trees like grass, and flatten out castles like houses of cards. It became more and more the fashion to seek out less showy and more secluded country resorts; the whole population, led by magistrates, merchants, and all its natural leaders, fleeing with startling rapidity to the mountains and concealing themselves in holes and caverns, which they blocked behind them with big rocks. Even this was not very successful; the monster proceeded to scale the mountains with the gaiety of a goat, to kick the rocky barricades to pieces, letting in daylight on the cowering company within; and many of them were able to recognise the familiar shape of the long and curling tongue of the intelligent creature, exploring their retreat and coiling and twisting and darting about in a very playful and sportive manner. Those who had not found any hole to

crawl into, and who were clinging in crowds to the crags higher up the hill, were at this moment, however, surprised with a sight that almost took their thoughts for an instant off the universal peril. On the highest crag of all, above their heads, had appeared suddenly the figure of Sir Laverok with his old spear in his hand, with his sword girt around his ragged armour, and the wind waving about his wild hair that was the colour of flame. In all that huddling crowd it was only the man in hiding who stood out conspicuous; and only the man fleeing from justice who did not flee.

"I am not afraid," he said in answer to their wild cries. "You know I have a trick of finding my way to places of safety. And as it happens, I know a castle to which I shall retreat, and to which the dragon can never come."

"But my good Sir," said the Chancellor, pausing in the act of trying to creep into a rabbit-burrow, "the dragon can grind castles to powder with his heel. I regret to say that he showed not the least embarrassment even in approaching the Law Courts."

"I know of a castle which he cannot reach," said Sir Laverok.

"The offensive animal," said the Lord Chamberlain, poking his head for a moment out of a hole in the ground, "actually entered the king's private chamber without knocking."

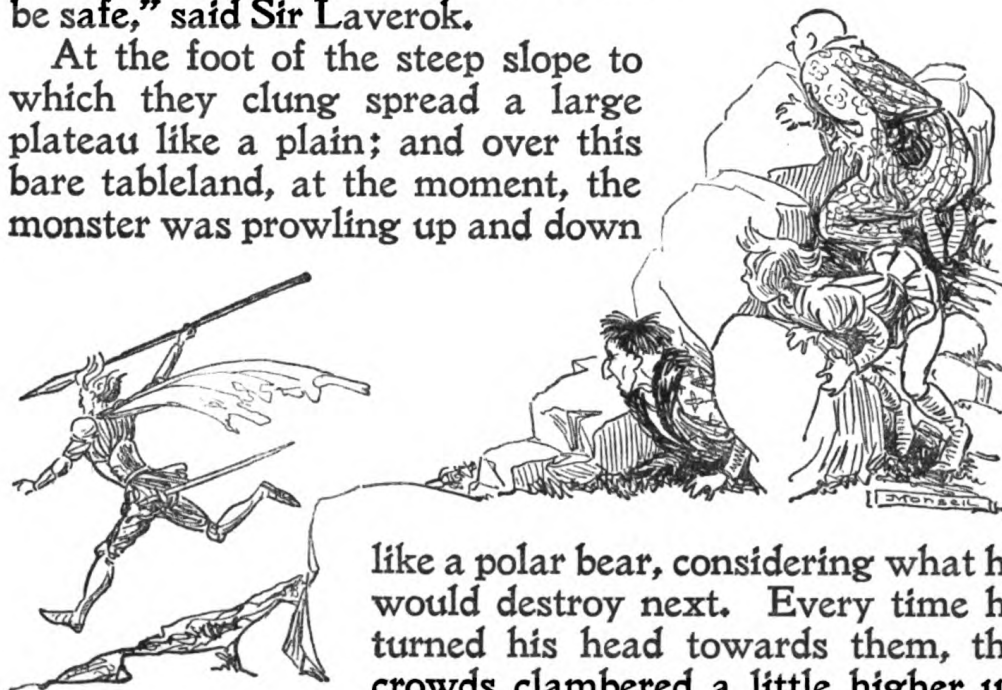
"I know of a private chamber that he cannot enter," replied the outlaw knight.

"It is very doubtful," came the muffled voice of the Lord High Admiral from somewhere underground, "whether we shall even be safe in any of the caverns."

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"I know a cavern where I shall be safe," said Sir Laverok.

At the foot of the steep slope to which they clung spread a large plateau like a plain; and over this bare tableland, at the moment, the monster was prowling up and down



like a polar bear, considering what he would destroy next. Every time he turned his head towards them, the crowds clambered a little higher up the hill; but they soon saw, to their astonishment, that Sir Laverok was not climbing up, but climbing down. He dropped from the last overhanging rock, and rushed out upon the plain against the monster; when he came within a short distance, the knight gave one wild leap and threw his spear like a thunderbolt.

What happened in the flash of that thunderbolt nobody in the crowd seemed to know. Those who knew them best were of opinion that they all shut their eyes tight, and most probably fell flat on their faces. Others say that the monster stamped his foot upon his enemy with so stunning a shock that a cloud of dust rolled up to the clouds of heaven, and for a moment hid the whole scene. Others,

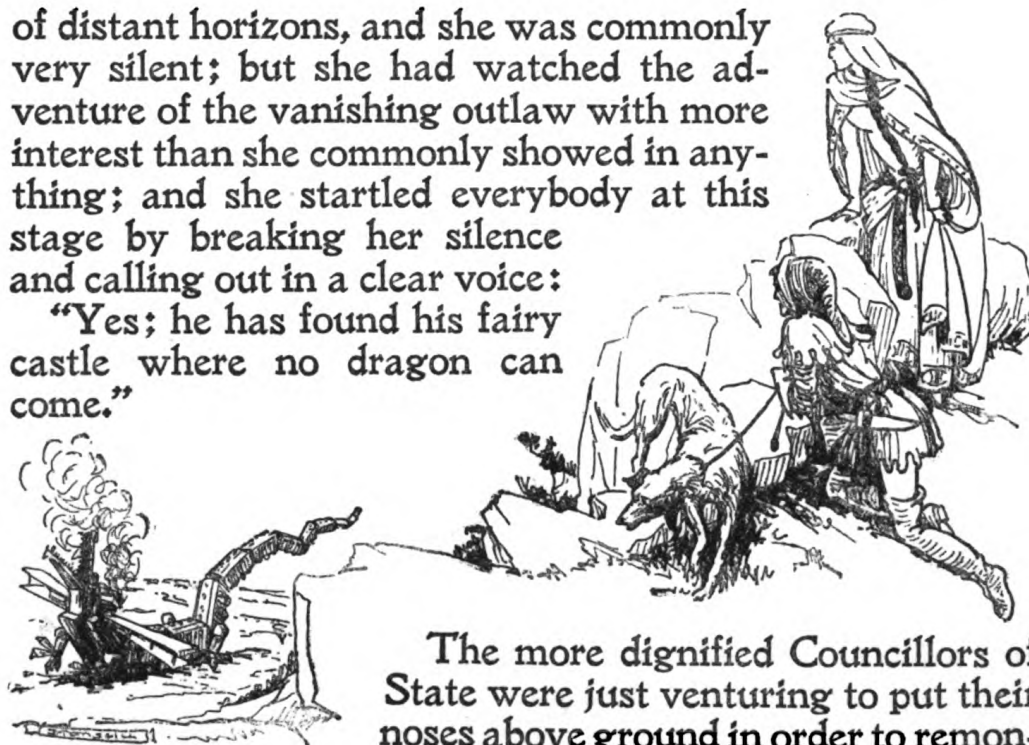
again, explained that the vast immeasurable bulk of the monster had come between them and the victim. Anyhow, it is certain that when that vast bulk turned once more and began swaying and lurching backwards and forwards on its lonely prowl, no sign of the victim could be seen. Probably he had been stamped to mire as everything else had been. But if it were conceivable that he had indeed escaped, as he had boasted, it was hard to say where; as there did not seem to be anywhere for him to escape to. And the authorities in the holes and caves could not but regret that they had not condemned him to be burned as a wizard instead of hanged as a rebel, whenever they should have put the final touch to the sentence by carrying it into effect. They comforted themselves in the cave by the reflection that at least no hasty capture or premature execution had yet put it out of their power to rectify the mistake; but for the moment it seemed clear that their chances either of hanging or burning the gentleman were further off than ever.

Just at that moment, however, there was a new interruption. It so happened that the king's third daughter was standing in the crowd on the slope; for all the elder members of the royal family were enjoying a temporary and semi-official retirement from the cares of state at the bottom of a dry well on the other side of the mountain range. But she had been unable or unwilling to travel with the extreme rapidity which they had had the presence of mind to exhibit; for she was rather an absent-minded person, wholly without aptitude for practical politics. She was called the Princess Philomel, and was a dreamy sort of person, with long hair and blue eyes that were like the blue

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of distant horizons, and she was commonly very silent; but she had watched the adventure of the vanishing outlaw with more interest than she commonly showed in anything; and she startled everybody at this stage by breaking her silence and calling out in a clear voice:

"Yes; he has found his fairy castle where no dragon can come."



The more dignified Councillors of State were just venturing to put their noses above ground in order to remonstrate respectfully against the breach of etiquette, when everybody's attention was again distracted to the monster, who was behaving in an even more extraordinary way than usual. Instead of pacing backwards and forwards with a certain pomposity as he had done before, he was bounding to and fro, taking totally unnecessary leaps into the air and clawing in a most uncomfortable and inconsequent fashion.

"What is the matter with him now?" enquired the Master of the Buckhounds, who was something of a student of animal life, and would, under other circumstances, have been much interested in the phenomenon.

"The monster is angry," replied the Princess Philomel in

the same absolute if abstracted fashion. "He is angry because the knight has reached the magic chamber and cannot be found."

If the monster was indeed exhibiting anger, it would seem that his anger had an element of self-reproach. For he was evidently clawing and scratching at himself rather in the manner of a dog hunting a flea, but much more savagely.

"Can he be killing himself?" asked the Lord Chancellor hopefully. "I am the keeper of the King's conscience, and not, of course, the keeper of the dragon's. But it seems possible that his conscience, if once aroused, would find in retrospect some legitimate ground for remorse."

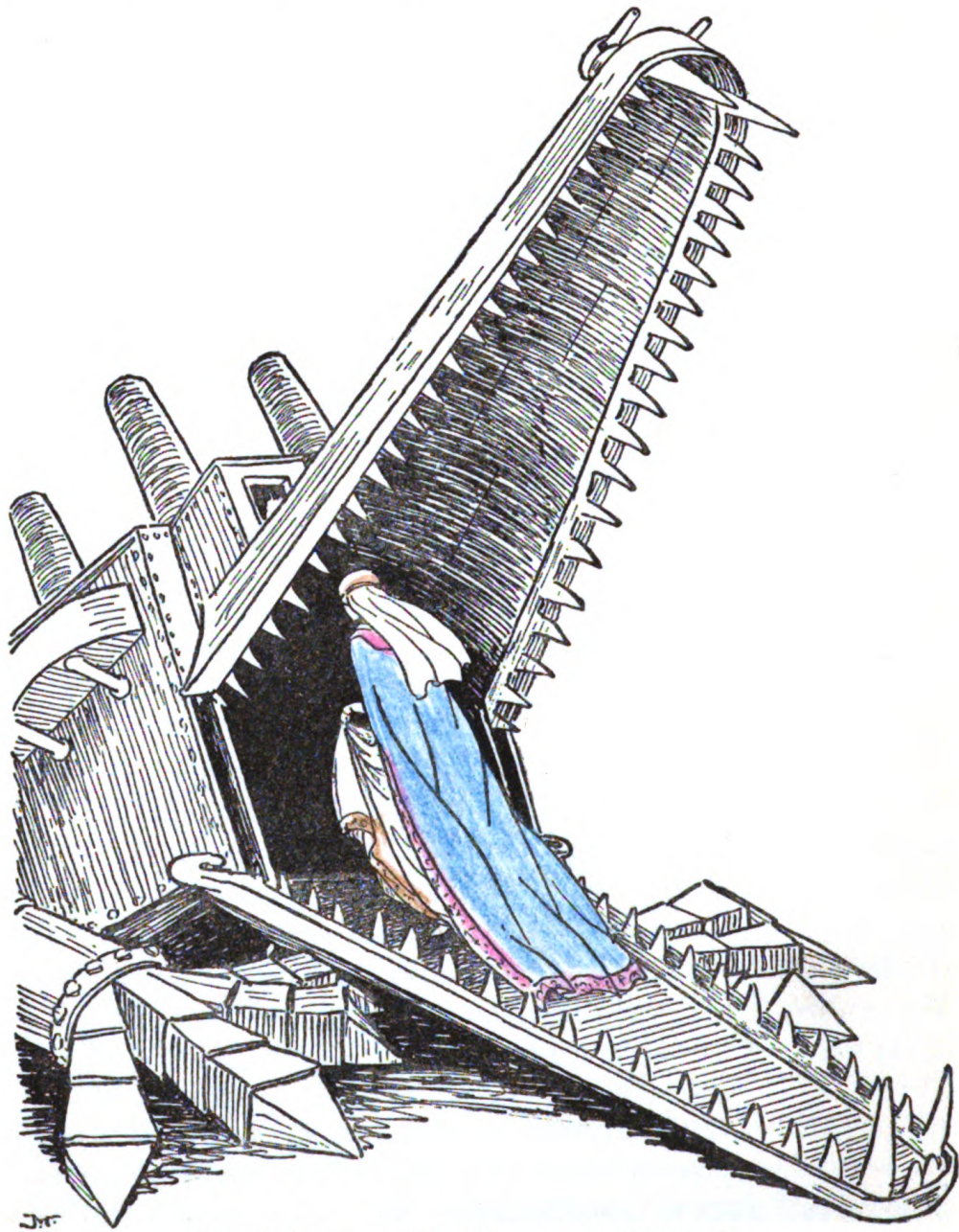
"Nonsense," said the Chamberlain, "why should he kill himself?"

"If it comes to that," answered the other, "why should he fight himself, as he seems to be doing?"

"Because," answered the Princess, "Sir Laverok has at last reached the cavern where he is safe."

But even as she spoke, a further and final change seemed to pass over the monster. For a moment it looked as if he had turned into two or three different monsters, for the different parts of him were behaving in different ways. One hind leg rested as calmly on the earth as the column of a temple, while the other was kicking wildly up behind and thrashing the air like the sail of a windmill. One eye was standing out of the head in hideous prominence, and rolling round and round like a catherine-wheel of fury, while the other was already closed with the placid expression of a cow who had gone to sleep. Then the next moment both eyes were closed, and both feet stationary, and the whole

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The Princess surprised them by walking inside.

monster, with a deprecating expression, turned his back and began to retreat towards the plains at an amiable and ambling trot.

Thus began the last phase of the celebrated Dragon of the Wilderness, which was more of a mystery than his wildest massacres and deeds of destruction. He interfered with nobody; he stood politely on one side for people to pass; he even succeeded, with some signs of reluctance, in becoming a vegetarian and subsisting entirely upon grass. But when the ultimate goal of his pilgrimage was discovered, the surprise was even more general. The wondering and still doubtful crowds that followed him across that country became gradually convinced of the incredible idea that he intended to go to church. Moreover, he approached the sacred edifice in a far more tactful and unobtrusive and respectful way than Sir Laverok had done in the old days, when he broke windows and tore up pavements in his indiscriminating excess of punctuality. Finally, the monster surprised them most of all by kneeling down and opening his mouth very wide with an ingratiating expression; and the Princess surprised them still more by walking inside.

Something in the way in which she did it revealed to the more thoughtful among them the fact that Sir Laverok had been inside the animal all the time. It is unnecessary to repeat here the explanations which gradually enlightened them about the inner truth of the story or the inner machinery of the dragon. This exact and scientific narrative is also addressed only to the thoughtful. And these will have no difficulty in guessing that a magnificent marriage ceremony took place in the interior of the dragon, which was treated as a temporary chapel while within the pre-

50 THE DRAGON AT HIDE-AND-SEEK

cincts of the consecrated building. They may even form some notion of what was meant when the Princess, who was given to oracular remarks, said, "The whole world will behave differently when heroes find their hiding-place in the world." But it must be confessed that those learned men, the Chancellor and the Chamberlain, could make very little of it.

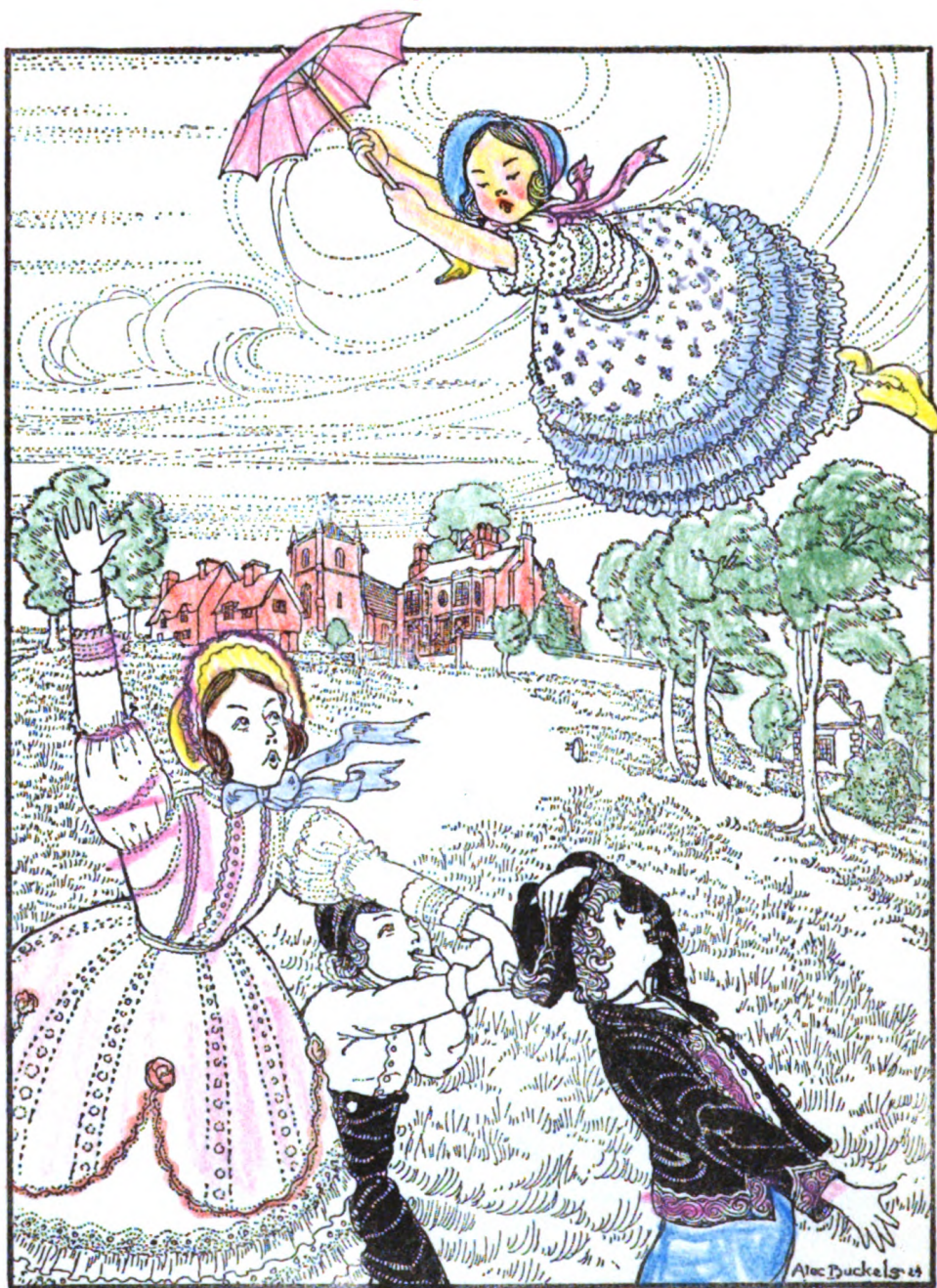
THE CRINOLINE

By B. K. PYKE

CHARLOTTE all in hoop and frill
Was blown away
On Strawberry Hill;

Searched in every town and vale
She was found
In a milking pail!





Charlotte all in hoop and frill
Was blown away. . . .

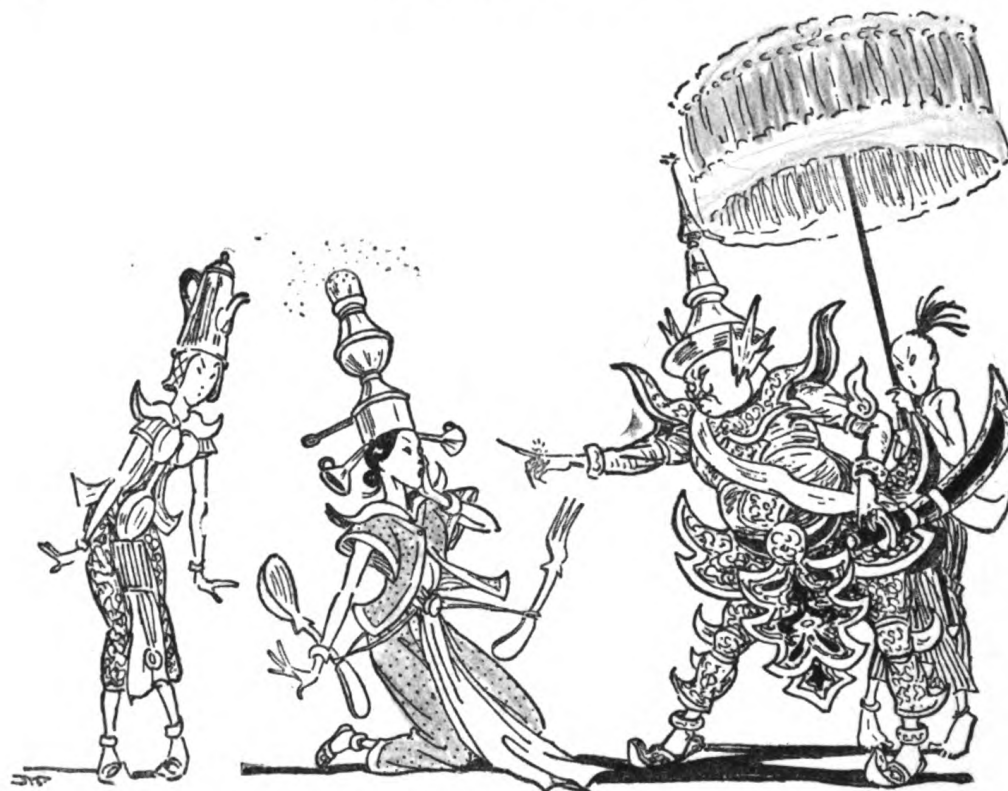


RED PEPPER

By THOMAS QUAYLE

IT was the day before the Prince's wedding. All was hurry and bustle in the kitchen. Suddenly the Cook exclaimed: "I have lost the pepper!" The King replied: "If that be so, then woe is me! For is it not written in the Great Book that my father brought from the Isles of the West, that all the bridal dishes must be sprinkled with red pepper? Otherwise sad troubles and misfortunes shall follow my son and his bride all the days of their life. Therefore, O Cook, I tell thee that the pepper-castor must be found, and if it be not found before the shadow of the Great Mosque falls athwart the orange-grove, thou shalt surely die the death." And putting on his crown and his purple robes, he walked sadly away, followed in slow procession by his seven pages, his cup-bearer and his favourite minstrel.

At the words of the great King, the Cook wept sadly, and made much lamentation. And all the maids, too, lifted their voices and wept. The Chief Butler and his twenty-



three assistants, likewise moaned and tore their hair, for you must know that red pepper was an exceedingly scarce commodity throughout that land, and full well feared they, that none could by any good hap be procured before the shadow of the Great Mosque fell athwart the orange-grove. And so, weeping altogether, they led the Cook gently to her marbled kitchen, with its great copper cauldrons, its gleaming ovens and fire-irons, its porcelain pie-dishes and pewter pots, over which she had reigned for long years, and there they left her for a while, that she might commune with herself, and make her peace with the gods.

* * * * *

So the Cook sat her down sadly in the big rocking-chair, the very chair in which her own mother had rocked and dangled her. She gazed at the little tender beams of sunlight as they flashed through the diamond-paned window. Outside the thrushes sang gaily in the lilac bushes, and from the far corners of the Palace Gardens, she could hear the soft twitterings of tomtits and robins. And as she saw and heard all these sights and sounds, just as if she had before her all the friends and companions of her girlhood days, she rocked herself to and fro, and keened bitterly, and in her grief spoke forty curses on the castor, and on the thieves who had purloined the precious treasure.

Now it happened that just in front of the half-opened and diamond-paned window, there was a golden cage in which fluttered a little cockatoo. The King's mother, herself, had brought it from far-away lands as a present for the Cook, and it was indeed her greatest pet. Many a dainty did she keep for it, and many a lump of sugar, even in the days of dearth, when queues and coupons troubled the heart of the people. Red and purple was its plumage, with little tufts of faint sea-green. Keen and sparkling were its eyes, and often, when the golden sunbeams flooded the Cook's kitchen, these eyes seemed to gaze out very fiercely, as if the many-coloured bird could see its far-away home, there across the wide, wide seas, the little palm-fringed isle with the surf dashing in glistening white up to its yellow sands, to fall back to the main-sea deep with soft, sad music.

* * * * *

And as the Cook made her moan the little cockatoo cocked its head on one side, as if listening eagerly. For you must know that the isle where the bird was born and

bred was famed throughout the world for its rare, rich, red pepper. Kings and Queens eagerly sought for it, and merchants from Arabia, from Persia and from a far-away island called Britain, came often to barter for it. And as the



Cook keened softly, and bewept the loss of the castor, you would have thought that the little cockatoo was going mad with excitement, for it fluttered wildly around its golden cage, and beat its wings against the bars, as if some wonderful scheme were whirling through its little brain.

And then, to the amazement of the Cook, the cockatoo put its pert head through the bars of the golden cage and spoke in this wise: "O Cook, be not afraid, for I tell thee

that before the shadow of the Great Mosque falls athwart the orange-grove, there shall be brought to thee from my home far, far across the seas rich, rare, red pepper, such as Kings and Queens and great merchants delight in. Only open the door of my golden cage, and thou wilt be saved!"

Something spoke in the heart of the Cook, and told her that the bird could save her. So, opening the door of the golden cage, she let the cockatoo go free. For a moment it flew up and down the kitchen in the full beams of the morning sun, flashing and sparkling like a little bundle of diamonds and pearls, and amethysts and rubies. Then with a shrill cry it darted out of the window, and soon all that the Cook could see was a tiny speck mounting up the pathway of the sun.

Away flew the little bird, as if for its very life. Now it is skimming over the silvery surface of the sun-sprinkled sea, bright and glittering as a polished mirror. Now it is high up among the clouds, lost in fleecy folds of pearly white. On and on and on it flew, until at last it could glimpse the palm-fringed, surf-beaten shore where it had spent its youngest and happiest days.

* * * * *

Meantime the dread hour drew near, for the shadow of the Great Mosque was soon to fall athwart the orange-grove. The Ten Executioners, with their heavy swords were ready, and the priests sang a sad song as they moved slowly to the place of execution. All the household wept, but the Cook herself wept not. She sat in silence gazing steadily through the diamond-paned window up the golden pathway of the sun. And the people in pity said: "Her

mind has given away! Alas! she is distracted!" Yet they crowded around her to say farewell, but she spake not a word, only gazed steadily at the fleecy clouds.

And now, indeed, but few moments were left before the shadow of the Great Mosque should fall athwart the orange-grove, and all things were ready, and lamentations arose on every side. But just as the Lord High Executioner moved to the Cook's side to pinion her arms, and cover her eyes, she uttered a great cry, and pointed to a little speck up, far up, in the sky. It flashed like a dewdrop of the morn, and sparkled like jewels of great price, and ever it came nearer and nearer, until the astonished people saw that it was the little cockatoo, gleaming in the sunlit glory of its red and purple, and faint sea-green. Through the window it flew as if it had travelled down the



pathway of the sun. Once, and once only, it flew around the marbled kitchen, and then, with a shrill cry, it alighted gently on the shoulder of the Cook. And all the women gave a great shout, for fastened to the back of the little bird was a packet of the rich, rare, red pepper beloved of Kings and Queens, and sought for by rich merchants. And seeing it, the people rejoiced exceedingly, even the King himself, and sang songs of joy, and raised their voices in exultation, but the little cockatoo, fluttering feebly, fell dead on the floor of the marbled kitchen.

Thus was the Cook saved, and joyous was the revelry at the marriage-feast, and cunningly were the bridal dishes sprinkled with rich, rare, red pepper. And the little cockatoo was buried with honour, in the centre of the Palace Gardens, near the orange-grove, just where the shadow of the Great Mosque falls athwart it. And if you do not believe this tale, ask the robin redbreast, or the thrush, for all the birds know it well.

MISHY THE SURF-BABY

By MABEL MARLOWE

MISHY the surf-baby had twenty brothers and twenty sisters, and ever so many other relations. But the one he loved best was Benny-whisper, who was the youngest of all the surf-babies.

Benny-whisper was as tall as a banana, and so golden-yellow that when he lay on the sand he could scarcely be seen. But Mishy was as tall as a cucumber, and the face of him was always covered with smiles.

Now one morning Mishy awoke with a big noise in his ears. All the surf-babies were running to and fro, making such a commotion, and the Mother of all the surf-children was making more noise than anyone.

"Whatever is the matter?" said Mishy.

"Benny-whisper is lost! Oh, Mishy, Benny-whisper is lost!"

"Where is he lost?" said Mishy.

"If we knew that, he wouldn't *be* lost," said the Mother of all the surf-babies. "Oh, Mishy, do help us to find him."

Then Mishy jumped out of his bed and ran down to the edge of the water, where the waves were making rims of froth on the yellow sand. He stood with his toes in the ripples, and he called out, "Oh waves of the sea, Benny-whisper is lost. Have you got him?"



But the waves of the sea splashed up and down in the sunlight, and they answered, "No. We haven't got him."

Then Mishy the surf-baby ran and stood upon a high rock, where the wind went whistling through his hair. He spread his arms out and called, "Oh wind, Benny-whisper is lost. Have you got him?"

But the wind puffed with his breath and answered, "No. I haven't got him."

Then Mishy the surf-baby dashed into the surf, and splashed his way through the shallow water until he reached the path of the sunbeams. He raised his wet arms above the waves and he called out, "Oh, beautiful sun, Benny-whisper is lost. Pray help me to find him, for I love him so."

So the golden sun opened his big eye very wide and sent his beams searching all through the daylight. But there was no sign of Benny-whisper.

Mishy the surf-baby went slowly home. All the twinkles were gone out of his eyes, and the smile on his face was a sad little smile. He sat down in the doorway, nursing his knees, and all his brothers and sisters came and sat beside him. Not a word did they say. But they all rocked to and fro, looking very sad.

At last Mishy jumped to his feet, and he said, "Benny-whisper must be somewhere. He is in a place where the sea does not reach. He is in a place where the wind does not blow, and where the beams of the sun cannot shine. He is in a corner somewhere. But I will find him. I will find him if I have to search until bedtime."

So he went down among the rocks, where the little crabs were scuttling in the wet sand. He turned each rock over.

and hunted in the dark shadows beneath it. But Benny-whisper was not there.

Then Mishy went among the seaweed, and lifted each heavy strand that trailed about the cliffs, and peeped into each little crevice and corner. But Benny-whisper was not there.

Then Mishy said to himself, "I will climb the face of the cliff. Perhaps Benny-whisper is high up on a ledge, and cannot get down."

So he clambered up the face of the cliff, holding on by the sea-lavender bushes that grew there, and calling out, "Benny-whisper! Benny-whisper, where are you? Mishy wants you! Mishy is looking for you! Oh, Benny-whisper, call out to me, and tell me where you are!"

But there was no answer.

Then Mishy climbed higher and higher. His little arms began to ache. His little toes began to throb. He reached a ledge at last, overhung by the top of the cliff and half hidden with samphire.

"I must rest here for a little," said Mishy with a yawn. So he curled himself up in a corner and closed his tired eyes.

In ten minutes he was asleep.

* * * * *

Mishy the surf-baby awoke with a queer, warm, cosy kind of feeling that he had never known before. Something airy and soft and warm was spread above him. It was very dark, and the only sound to be heard was a throb, throb, throb.

Mishy wriggled. Mishy kicked with his feet and pushed with his hands and parted the softness that was covering



She looked at Mishy.

him, so that the daylight shone into his eyes. Then he saw, to his amazement, that a seagull was sitting upon him—sitting so softly that she felt like warm snow, and the beat of her heart throbbed like the tick of a velvet clock.

Mishy wriggled again. Mishy made a little squeaking noise with his throat.

"The egg is hatching," said the gull.

"Get off it, and let me see," said another gull (it was the father one). Then the gull made a cooing kind of noise, and stood up on her feet.

She looked at Mishy, and she said not a word.

He looked at Mishy, and he said not a word.

They looked again. They shut their eyes, and opened them and looked again. They turned round three times, and looked at Mishy again.

Mishy began to laugh. He sat up, nursing his knees. His hair was all rumply, and his little cheeks were all rosy and warm. "This is a grand adventure," he said to himself, and he combed his hair back from his face with his fingers and laughed, showing glistening white teeth.

"That's an odd kind of gull," said the mother gull.

"A very odd kind of gull," said the father gull.

"It has no wings."

"It has no beak."

"It has no tail."

"It has toes on its feet."

"I don't know if I like it," said the mother gull.

"I don't know if I like it," said the father gull.

Then Mishy laughed aloud, and he stood up on his toes, and flung his arms wide. "I am a gull's baby," he cried.



The gull swooped down.

"Hurrah, I am a gull's baby. I can't think how it happened, but it's true." He danced about on the ledge like a sunshine-sprite, and he dimpled his lips and whistled like a canary.

"I believe I rather like him," said the father gull.

"So do I," said the mother gull. "Anyway, he is a most uncommon baby for a gull to have. No other gull has a baby like him. I think I am rather proud about it."

"So am I," said the father gull. "It is a pity he has no wings, but perhaps they will grow."

"I can ride on your back," said Mishy, and he ran and jumped upon the back of the father gull. "See, I am so light that you scarcely feel me," he said.

"You will fall off when I begin to fly."

"Try me," said Mishy.

Then the great bird laughed, and spread his beautiful white wings, and leaped from the ledge with a cry. The wind whistled past Mishy's ears as the gull swooped down towards the water. His brown hair blew back from his laughing face. He flung out his arms. He stood a-tiptoe with his little pink feet. Never before had he enjoyed such a wonderful ride.

But all of a sudden he remembered Benny-whisper.

"Oh, take me to the breakers," cried Mishy. So the gull swooped along the edge of the ripples, where the surf-babies were washing in the foam.

"Is Benny-whisper found?" shouted Mishy, and all the surf-babies answered, "No!"

Then Mishy cried out to the gull, and he said, "Oh, father gull, take me for a ride across the ocean." So the beautiful bird beat at the air with his wings, and rose, and



So the gull flew back with two surf-babies

sped right away across the blue water, where the tips of the waves were crested with white.

But Mishy was not smiling now. He was looking around him with anxious eyes, and all the while he was calling out, "Benny-whisper, where are you?"

"Mishy! Mishy! MISHY!" came a little voice.

Mishy looked down. There, far below him on the billows, was a green rock, all glistening in the sunlight—and standing on the edge of it was Benny-whisper.

"Oh, take me to that rock," cried Mishy. So the gull swerved and sailed down to the rock, and Mishy jumped off and caught Benny-whisper in his arms.

"However did you get here?" he said, between kisses.

"The tide brought me. I was sailing in my little cockle boat."

"The waves of the sea did not tell me."

"The sea did not know. I kept in the bottom of the boat and went to sleep."

"The wind did not tell me."

"I pulled some seaweed over me before I went to sleep."

"The sun did not tell me."

"I kept in the shade."

Then Mishy the surf-baby laughed more gaily than he had ever laughed before. He picked Benny-whisper into his arms, and leaped upon the back of the gull, and cried out, "Oh, dear father gull, fly back as quickly as you can. Fly back to the breakers, where the ripples of the sea are making froth on the golden sand."

So the gull flew back, with two surf-babies nestling among his feathers.

* * * * *

"What have you done with that strange baby?" said the mother gull.

"I left him with the surf-babies."

"That is very lucky," said the mother gull. "When you were gone I found my egg, still in the nest, not hatched at all."

"Then he was not a gull's baby, after all."

"No. But I rather liked him."

"So did I."

* * * * *

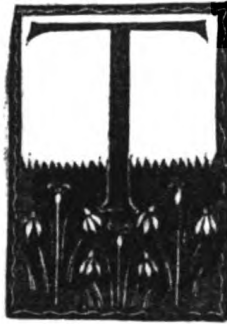
Mishy the surf-baby often climbs the face of the cliff to the ledge behind the samphire bush. He climbs up, but he doesn't climb down again. He comes down on the back of his friend the gull, in the loveliest, swiftest joy-ride that there could ever be.

THE PRINCESS OF KENSINGTON

By MADELEINE NIGHTINGALE

WHEN, very long ago, Oberon held his court in Kensington Gardens, the King of this Island had a son named Albion. Now, as everyone knows, fairies have a dreadful habit of stealing mortal babies and leaving small elfin changelings in their stead. This is just what happened to Albion, and he was brought up in Fairyland. When he was nineteen years old (according to human countings) he fell in love with Oberon's daughter; but since no fairy may marry a mortal, Oberon was very angry and banished the young man from his fairy empire. So dearly, however, did Albion love the Princess that, rather than give her up, he sought the help of Neptune, and was slain by the elves in the great battle that followed. In revenge, Neptune destroyed Oberon's kingdom, driving out the elves so that they live now only in the hills and the dales and the sea-caves and the rivers and the woods. The Princess remained and sought to bring her lover back to life by means of a magic herb. It is said that no sooner did the juice of it touch Albion's body than it changed into a snowdrop. But we are afraid that, in her love and sorrow, the poor little Princess has forgotten.





THE Princess of Kensington
 Goes down the cobbled street;
 Listen to the patter
 Of her small brocaded feet.
 Her peacock, her page-boy,
 And maids-of-honour two,
 From dawn to dusk they follow her
 London through.

The fairies of Kensington
 Are driven out and gone.
 From Hyde Park to Holland Park
 There's left but only one;
 And she—she's lost her lover
 And searches up and down
 The highways and byways
 Of London town.

The night-watch of Kensington
A-calling on his round,
"Two o' the clock and starlight!"
—It is a pleasant sound.
But, ah, the little Princess,
How softly whispers she,
"Albion! Albion!
Where can—where can he be?"

The children of Kensington
Lazily they lie,
Fast and warm within their beds,
And hear her passing by.
But not a child will draw his blind
And shout, "Oh, *don't* you know?
He's hiding in the Green Park
Where the snowdrops grow."





THOMAS THE RHYMER

By MADELEINE NIGHTINGALE

THE CHOOSING



SI was fishing by Huntlie Bank
 True Thomas he passed by.
 "Thomas the Rhymer!" I called his
 name;
 He turned and he looked and back he came.
 "And how may I serve you, my pretty
 child,
 Sitting so meek and sitting so mild,
 A-fishing the pool where the sedge is rank
 Round and about of Huntlie Bank?"
 And, oh, but the strangest face had he,

His coat was as green as the greenest sea,
And it seemed, as he stood and stared at me,
There was magic in his eye.
He held me an apple in his right hand
—The half of a fairy-man was he—
But up I got me and curtsied low,
Staid as a duchess and twice as slow;
And all my petticoats flounced as neat
As a daisy's petals about my feet.
"Nay, prithee," said I, "good sir, if you
Be going to Elfland, why, take me too."
He clippeder a clap of his velvet shoon
And a little white road fell out of the moon.
Quoth he, "If we're starting we'd best start soon
Or we'll never be home for tea."



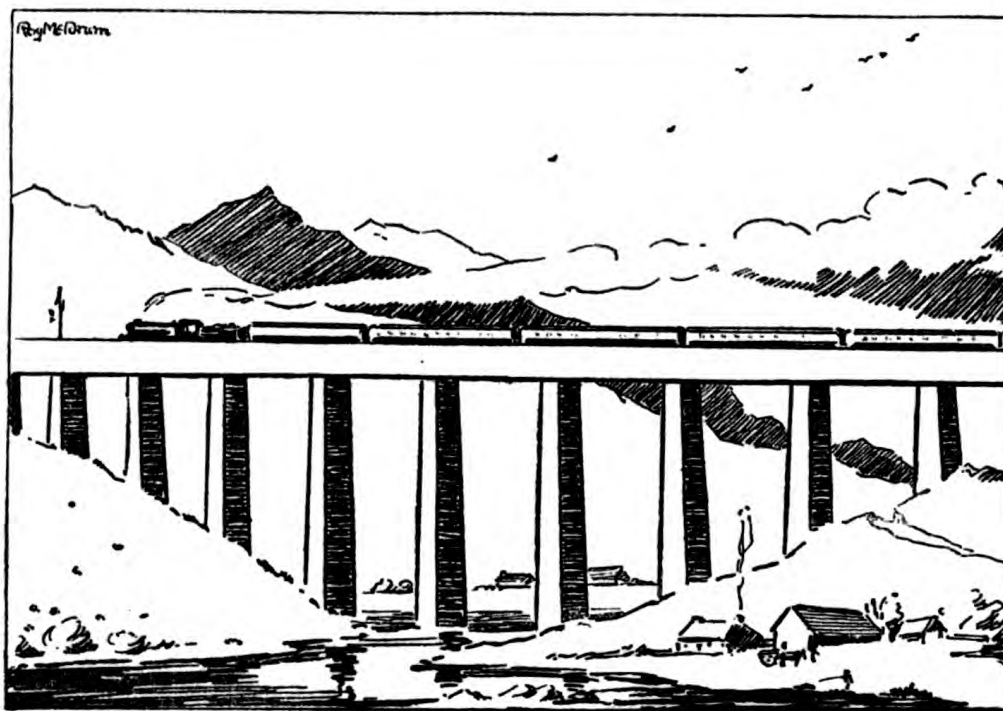


THE PIRATE SHIP

By MARIAN ALLEN

I WISH I was the Pirate King
Who sailed the seas in days of old;
I'd drink my wine and loudly sing,
And capture great ships packed with gold
And fling my captives in the hold
And sail away across the night
Beyond the moon so round and white.

The ships who sail the ocean now
Just wireless all they want to say,
Like "How d'you do," before they bow
And pass politely on their way;
All sorts of rules they must obey.
I think, when all is said and done,
The Pirate King had much more fun.



A STRANGER

By *HUGH WALPOLE*

A STORY TOLD BY
"UNCLE" EDWARD TO CHARLES AND ROSALIND

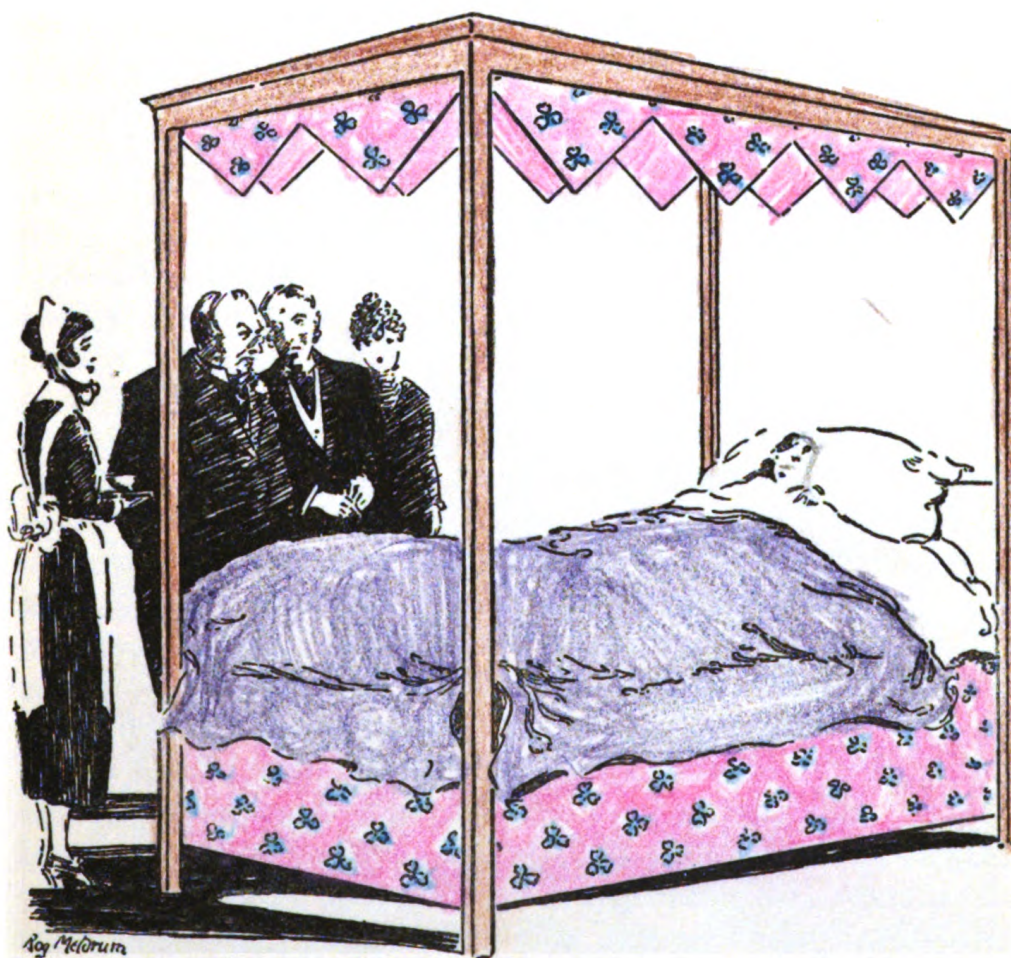
YOU asked me yesterday afternoon, when we were out for a walk, to tell you what was the most exciting thing that ever happened to me. People are excited in such different ways, you know, and it's quite possible that this won't seem exciting to you at all, but you asked me, and I'll do my best to tell you. I am now ever so old, as I heard Rosalind saying to Miss Banbury when she was trying to teach you French verbs the other morning, and when you are as old as I am, you'll find that the things that

you remember best are the things that happened years and years ago. For instance, I remember nothing about last Christmas, except that we had a tree, and that Charlie was sick on Boxing Day, but if you ask me to tell you every little thing that happened to me before I was fourteen, I fancy that I can; mind you, I say fancy, as it is possible that I am making the whole thing up, but what's the real difference between making things up and remembering things that once happened to you, it will need a cleverer man than your uncle to tell you.

Now I come to the point. This adventure began with reading a book in a farmhouse. I know that both of you would rather go to Shawmill Farm than anywhere else in the world. You are always telling me so, and that month in the summer doesn't seem nearly to content you, and apparently you expect me to take you off there any time at a moment's notice on a kind of magic carpet like the one I told you about the other day. Well, my farm was every bit as good as yours; in fact, if you don't mind my saying so it was, I think, a little bit better, but everybody has their favourite farm and the longer it is since you've been there the more favourite it is. I loved mine so much partly because I think, it was my first one, and I have never had all the good times that both of you are so accustomed to that you don't know they are good times at all. For one thing, I had no brothers or sisters, and for another thing, my mother died when I was so small that I can scarcely remember her. Then my father wasn't like your father; the only things he cared for were books, and those are very good things to care about, but if you care for them too much, you forget about people, and think that books are

more important than people, which they are not, and never can be, and don't you forget it.

Mind you, my father was very kind to me when he remembered me, but he had to leave me a great deal in the hands of other people. We lived in London in a very large house, so large that when you were in the top part of it it was like being in another house altogether. I had lots of room to move about in, plenty of toys, and anything I wanted so long as the grown-ups thought it was good for me, but what I wanted most was other children to play with, and that I never had. One day I was ill. I had one of those terrible headaches that you get, Charlie, sometimes from eating too much, but that I got, I think, from being by myself and thinking too much. I don't mean that you haven't got to do your work properly; it is a silly thing to be lazy, so that when you grow up everyone thinks how stupid you are, and wonders why you never learnt anything. But my thinking was done all by myself, and I formed a very bad habit of talking to myself, and I think it was because I talked so much to myself that I got the headache of which I was telling you. Well, I was put to bed, and the doctor came to see me, and poked me in the chest, and put a thermometer in my mouth, and looked at my tongue, and went away and didn't say a word, and they kept me in bed so long that I got very tired of it and wondered if they were ever going to let me get up again. Then at last a wonderful day arrived when I put on my clothes again, and although my legs were very shaky and I was as weak as a kitten I was so proud at being out of bed that I could have danced all round the schoolroom. Then I was told that Father wanted to see me, so I went all the



I was put to bed.

way down to the library, and there he was, as he always was, sitting at a large table covered with books, and looking at me when I came in with a puzzled expression that people have when they have been reading a great deal. Although he was so kind to me I was a little afraid of my father; although he wanted to, I don't think he knew how to make children easy and comfortable. I went and stood beside him, and he put his arm around me and asked me whether I was feeling quite well now, and I said yes, which wasn't quite true I'm afraid, and then he said how would I like to go into the country? I hadn't very much idea what the country really was. I had been once to the sea-side but I hadn't enjoyed it because I was never allowed to go about by myself, and I was rather afraid of the country to tell you the truth, but I wasn't going to show anybody that I was afraid, and I said that I would like to go. Then he gave a great sigh and I always remember that sigh because it was the first time that I realised that he had troubles just as I had them. I'd like to have asked him what his troubles were but I hadn't the courage. Then he kissed me and told me to go upstairs again and upstairs I went. I was excited all day at this thought of the country, but I didn't like to ask anybody any questions because I might be thought foolish and I tell you both here and now always ask questions if you want to ask them; never mind how foolish people will think you; that's the only way to learn anything.

Next morning I was wrapped up so warmly that I looked like a little polar bear. I came downstairs again; my father was in the hall and kissed me; then I was put into a carriage with my governess who was called Miss Somer-



You know what it is like waking up on the first morning at your farm.

set, whom, between you and me and the bedpost, I didn't like at all. She was always telling me not to do things, but never suggesting things that I might do or, at any rate, never suggesting interesting things. However, I was so terribly excited that I didn't mind about Miss Somerset or anyone else. We came to the station and got into the train, and I am afraid I can't remember anything about the journey. I think I must have slept most of the time because I seem to remember that when the train started it was in the morning, and the sun was shining, and a minute later it was quite dark outside the windows and there was a light in the carriage. Directly after that, Miss Somerset said, "Here we are," and that she had a terrible headache. I remember about her headache, because I asked her whether it was the same as mine, and she told me not to ask silly questions, but I didn't care what she said because now we were out on the platform and the wind was blowing so strongly that it nearly took me off my feet. There had been a wind at the sea but this was different; there was something exciting about it. I remember last year when we were on the hill above the farm, Rosalind saying what an exciting wind it was. This was just the same sort of wind, friendly, as though it had come to the station to meet you and wanted to carry you off with it to some fine place that it knew of. All Miss Somerset said was, "Bother the wind." She hurried me into a cab that was waiting outside the station. We drove for a long time in the dark, and although I couldn't see anything I had a feeling that it was different from any other place that I had ever been to. There was a kind of smell about it that was quite new to me, and it was all so quiet after

London that I felt as though it were waiting to get me away from Miss Somerset, and then tell me something very important. We got out of the cab at last, and then I was so sleepy that I fell right into somebody's arms and was taken up to bed without noticing anything at all.

You know what it is like waking up on the first morning at your farm, how first you smell the difference of the house, the scent of the bacon that you're going to eat in half-an-hour's time is coming up the wrong staircase; through the window which if you're wise, you've had open all night, there are all sorts of new smells; the air smells differently and it's as though you'd had your bed planted in the very middle of a field all night, so close do you seem to the scent of the soil, and then, almost at once, smells are connected with noises. The first thing you were conscious of waking in London was the toot of a cab or the rattle of a tram, and now it's a dog and a horse, and above all, a cock strutting about conceitedly on the top of a wall just under your window. Then, although you've scarcely raised your head from the pillow, the sounds and the smells together carry your imagination—the most useful part of you by a long run—across the fields, out of the gate up the hill behind the farm to the Downs, and your feet are already dancing on that turf that is so alive that you can almost feel it moving under you.

That's what happens on your farm, how much more was it the case on mine? Remember, I had never been away from a town before, and when I rather timidly looked out of my window and saw first a yard with chickens and a large black dog, a pond blue in the morning sun at the end of it and ducks paddling there, and then beyond it fields

greener than I had believed it possible for grass to be, and beyond them a mysterious dark wood that seemed to be begging me to step into it, you can imagine whether I was excited or not. But I tell you the honest truth, I don't, on looking back, think that this was ideally the place for a boy's first farm; only you see, I couldn't criticise it, because I had never been to another one. Now, you would, both of you, be very severe critics of farms, because you happen to have for yours one of the brightest and most beautiful that ever was made, and yet I said just now that my farm was better than yours, and I said that because you are both a little spoilt about things. When I was small children didn't have any of the fun and excitement that you both have every minute of the day. People weren't always thinking about the best way to amuse children, how to keep them happy and give them fun, and so, when any fun did come our way, it meant a terrible lot to us, but I can see now on looking back that this was an odd farm to send a small boy all by himself to. There was, of course, Miss Somerset, but I hardly count her, because she was unwell, all the month we were there, sitting up in her room most of the time with that terrible headache of hers. I believe that really she had determined to hate the country before ever she got to it, being one of those people who get more happiness out of being miserable than out of being happy, and the result of this was that I was left a great deal to myself.

You know how you all love the Tuttles at your farm, and I tell you in confidence that I think that they are very nearly the nicest family in England. The man who ran my farm was called Mr. Andrew. He was a big, black,

silent man. I daresay that he meant to be friendly, but I don't think that he had much more idea about the way in which little boys are made comfortable than my father had, and then I discovered afterwards that his wife had died some five years before I arrived, and that made him melancholy. His sister, Miss Andrew, looked after the domestic part of the farm, and was as silent as her brother, so you can fancy that I hadn't very much company, but I didn't mind. I was thoroughly used to being by myself, and what I liked to do was to imagine myself somebody else and run it on for weeks and weeks, with fresh adventures every day. Rosalind told me the other day that she would like to write stories when she grew up just like me, but I was writing stories in my head almost from the moment I was born, I think. Perhaps Rosalind is doing the same, but if she is, she keeps it very dark. I hadn't been about the place for more than a day or two before I had decided that I was a prince in disguise, and owned all the country around me.

This country was called Cumberland, and the great feature about Cumberland is that it is made up for the most part of mountains and lakes. Now, you'll find that the very clever people who have travelled all over the world will tell you that the Cumberland mountains are nothing at all, that they are so small compared with other mountains, that they are only little hills, and that once you've been to Switzerland you'll never look at the English mountains again. Don't you believe them. I am very delighted for everybody to have their own opinion, but I also have travelled all over the world, and I tell you that there is something about the Cumberland Hills that no other hills

have got, and that they always look a great deal bigger than they are. I think that's because they are all in such beautiful proportion, and seem just as big as the Swiss mountains when you are in the middle of them. However that may be when you're grown up, they of course seem gigantic to a boy who has never seen any others. As a matter of fact, from my farm you could only see one mountain and that was a long way off, but that was quite enough for me; I filled it at once with every kind of treasure because I was prince of the whole country and could do as I liked with it, and at once put a secret door at the bottom of it, just where there was a little wood that looked from my window like a tooth-brush, and from this door there was a passage that led all the way through the mountain and had on every side of it large rooms filled with every kind of treasure, heaps and heaps of rubies, and piles of diamonds, and ropes and ropes of pearls. There was, of course, an enemy prince in the neighbouring country who wanted to take this mountain, and he would send spies and try to discover the way through the door, and one day even went there himself, but my right-hand man, Black Jack, was waiting for him and in spite of all his troubles succeeded in imprisoning him in a cave all by himself on the side of the mountain. That was a very great day for me when I heard that he had been captured.

I was allowed to go a great deal about by myself, very much more I fancy than my father would have approved had he known it but Miss Somerset, because of her headaches and because the weather was never what she thought it ought to be, and because there was so much mud about that she was afraid of getting her feet wet, kept



She said in Farmer Somebody's barn.

more and more in her room, and deputed her job of looking after me to the maid-of-all-work in the house, who was a girl from the village near by, and was called Nellie. Nellie was a good girl, and a kindly, but she had so much work to do, poor thing, that she couldn't do more than give me a look every once and again, to see that I was all right. I was very quiet and never gave anyone any trouble, and seemed to amuse myself very easily. Very soon they all ceased to bother about me. So the days went by, and very wonderful days they were to me. Then came the adventure of which I am going to tell you.

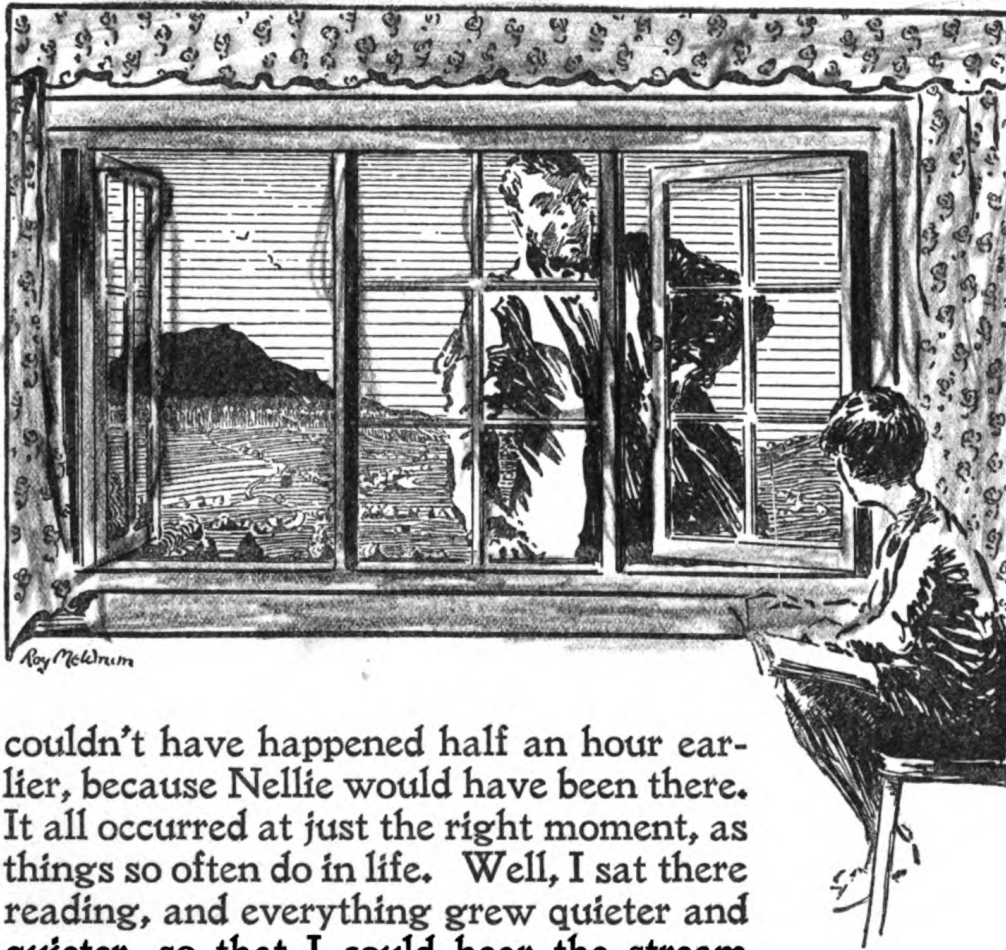
It was, of course, summer time when all this happened, and there came a day called midsummer's eve. That is the day when, as soon as the sun sets, all the fairies are supposed to come out and dance in rings on the grass, and run up and down the house, and play jokes on everybody and have a wonderful time. I knew about the fairies, because Nellie had told me, and I waited with great excitement determined that, however sleepy I might be, I would keep awake and watch all the fun. I wasn't frightened in the least, because I had known all about the fairies ever since I could remember, and many of them were my very good friends. I was tremendously pleased that at last I should have a chance of meeting some of them. That was a very beautiful day, and when the evening came everything was bathed in golden light, and the colours of the fields, and the wood, and the distant mountain were as clear as though they had been painted on glass. Mr. Andrew and his sister went out early in the evening to somebody's house and I was left alone with Miss Somerset and Nellie. There was a midsummer night's dance in the vil-

lage which Nellie, poor dear, was very anxious to go to, and she confided to me that it was a great shame that everybody else should have such great fun and that she shouldn't be able to share in it.

I was very sorry for Nellie; she had been so kind to me that I was very anxious to help her. I asked her how far away it was that they were dancing, she said in Farmer Somebody's barn at the bottom of the hill, and then I suggested that she should go down for an hour, that I would be quite all right. To tell the truth, I was in the very middle of a story called "Redgauntlet" that was written by one of the greatest men who ever lived. The same man wrote "Ivanhoe," that you told me was very long, Charlie, the other day when I wanted to read it to you. I don't want to shove books down your throats, but if you try to read "Redgauntlet," and find that too long for you, I am in despair of both of you. Well, in any case I was in the very middle of this book and Nellie, who was not herself fond of reading—indeed, I doubt whether she could read at all—had never learnt the great gift of "letting reading dogs lie." She would interrupt me every second, with an exclamation, or a wonder, or a surprise, so I was rather glad to get rid of her, and saw myself having a whole glorious hour perched on a very high chair by the window, and although I was reading so intensely that I never would lift my eyes from the page, at the same time I would be conscious of the light gradually fading from the sky, and green fields turning to silk, and of the birds slowly wheeling home. I loved all these things because, you see, I had always lived in streets. I think that it was really during that month that I grew to love space so deeply; I liked to

be able to look on and on and on, and to feel that I had only to order my snow-white charger to be brought to the door, and so go flying off through the dusk to my mountain fastnesses. Then the kitchen behind me was very wonderful, so large, that at this hour before the light had faded, before the candles were lit you could not see into its farthest corners, and all the plates in rows on the old dresser were like friendly faces smiling. It must have been nearly nine o'clock by now, and I was supposed to go to bed at nine, so that Nellie's obvious suggestion was, that I should go to bed, and then she should creep off for a little time. Mr. Andrew and his sister would not return till after ten, and Miss Somerset was fast asleep with her headache tucked quietly under her arm. But I begged Nellie to let me stay for a little while; I promised most faithfully to go up to bed exactly when the kitchen clock struck half-past nine. She had by that time so complete a faith in my keeping my word, and was so sure that I could come to no harm, that after one longing look through the open window at the lovely summer evening (we could hear very faintly coming up the hill strains of the rustic band) she nodded her head and said she would go. She slipped on her coat and hat, gave me a kiss and was off.

How I loved it when she was gone! If I sat at the right of my window, I could see the rounded top of my mountain quite black against a sky that was now very pale like an evening primrose. I remember the look of that sky so well because, when I look back, everything that was to happen in a minute seemed to be bathed in that light. If it had happened half an hour later I would have been frightened, because it would have been so dark, and it



couldn't have happened half an hour earlier, because Nellie would have been there. It all occurred at just the right moment, as things so often do in life. Well, I sat there reading, and everything grew quieter and quieter, so that I could hear the stream running over the pebbles at the bottom of the field, with a little tinkly sound of the fiddle coming up from the barn and even, I fancied, Miss Somerset's snores from upstairs. But for some reason or another I couldn't read; my own imaginations were stronger than the book, splendid though the book was. I was using my magic powers, I was holding my hand up to order the evening to stay still just as it was, as evening stayed still, you will

remember in "The Sleeping Beauty." There, they would all be for one thousand years, Nellie half way down the hill towards the dance, Miss Somerset snoring, the cows lying in the byre, the sheep in their pen, and two birds transfixed for ever in that primrose sky. I was feeling very powerful and very grand when in a moment the spell was broken, and a man appeared on the grass just outside the window, so close to me that if I had put out my hand I would have touched him.

The strange thing was that I wasn't frightened at all, although his appearance would have frightened many a grown-up person. He seemed very large in that evening light, he had been running and was breathing hard, his clothes were ragged and torn, and he had no hat on his head. He didn't say a word, but climbed over the window into the kitchen in a second of time. He didn't seem surprised to see me, but bent down very close to me (he was a very tall man indeed) so that his face was right up against mine, put his hand on my shoulder with such a grip that he almost lifted me off my chair, and said "Don't speak a word, or you'll be the worse for it!" The odd thing was, that I liked his face, it was odd because he can't have been beautiful to look at; his cheeks were rough and hairy, and his eyes were fierce, but it doesn't matter, everyone is either a friend or not a friend from the first moment you see them and I hadn't any doubt at all about him. "Of course, I won't tell anybody," I said getting off my chair, and I remember that I was so little frightened that I put the book down carefully on the window-sill so that it should come to no harm. He was, I think, astonished at my taking it so quietly, but he was too desperately alarmed



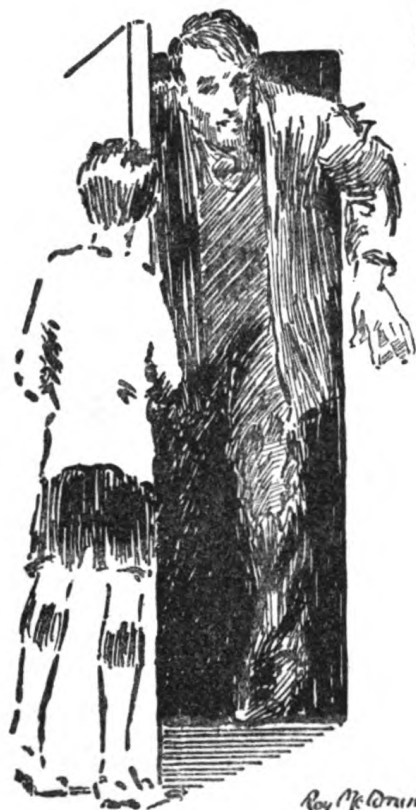
They stood me in the middle of the floor.

to think of anything but his own danger. He stood lost and bewildered in the kitchen, looking about him as though he couldn't pull himself together and make up his mind. Now, looking back, I should imagine that he wasn't very old, quite a young fellow, but he seemed to me, of course, extraordinarily big and strong. His clothes had been torn partly off his back, and his shoulder was bare and bleeding, and I remember that he kept trying to pull up his rent coat over the shoulder, as though he would like to appear more decent and respectable. I expect it was only a nervous movement, and he didn't know what he was doing. He realised, I suppose, that he must take me into his confidence, and that whatever happened he must reassure me, so he sat down in the big wooden arm-chair, and drew me towards him, and stood me between his knees. I remember as though it had happened only yesterday, that his trousers were torn, and his knees bare like his shoulder. He spoke to me then, very quietly (wonderfully quietly for a man pressed as he was) he told me that he was a stranger, this he impressed upon me over and over again. What kind of a stranger he was, he didn't tell me, but I realised that his voice wasn't like the voice of my father and my friends, and that although I could understand everything he said there was a curious twist once and again, that was like nothing I had ever heard before; but the point was that he was a stranger, and that he meant nobody any harm, but that they laughed at him, and that he stood as long as he could, and then they laughed at his country; that he could not stand, and so he had hit somebody. After that there had been a fight, and that he didn't know what had happened, but he was terrible when his anger was roused,

and that after all he was a stranger, that they were pursuing him now, all of them, with sticks and forks, and that if they caught him they would shut him up, and that he wasn't going to be shut up, that he meant nobody any harm, and if they tried to shut him up he would kill them, so they had better look out, and that after all he was a stranger; that was what was the matter, and that if he hadn't been a stranger they would never have touched him.

All the time that he was talking to me, he was looking into my eyes, and I was looking in his. He had his hands on my shoulders, and his bare knees pressed against my body, but he wasn't hurting me, and his eyes asked me to help him, and my eyes answered that I would without my speaking a word. Indeed I think I would have gone with him anywhere; it is odd when I look back, but I believe that this man with the rough hair and the torn clothes, in his terrible state of fear and haste was the first person in all the world who had talked to me in that kind of way. Perhaps what drew us together, although I was too young to understand it, was the fact that I was a stranger in my own way too, a stranger to Miss Somerset and a stranger to my father and to many another who didn't understand me nor what they called my funny ways. He took me on to his knee and held me close against him, as though I were the only safeguard he had in all the world, but I didn't say a word but just waited for him to tell me what to do.

However, I hadn't long to hesitate. We hadn't been there for more than five minutes I suppose, when we heard the sound of voices. In another moment he was on his



feet, gazing desperately about him. It had become suddenly dark, and all the voices seemed to swirl up on the grass plot outside the window. We stood in the shadow of the kitchen, and as though I had been a hundred years old, moving by instinct, I suppose, I had shown him a large empty cupboard in the farthest corner of the kitchen, and he was in it and the door closed, and it was as though he had never been.

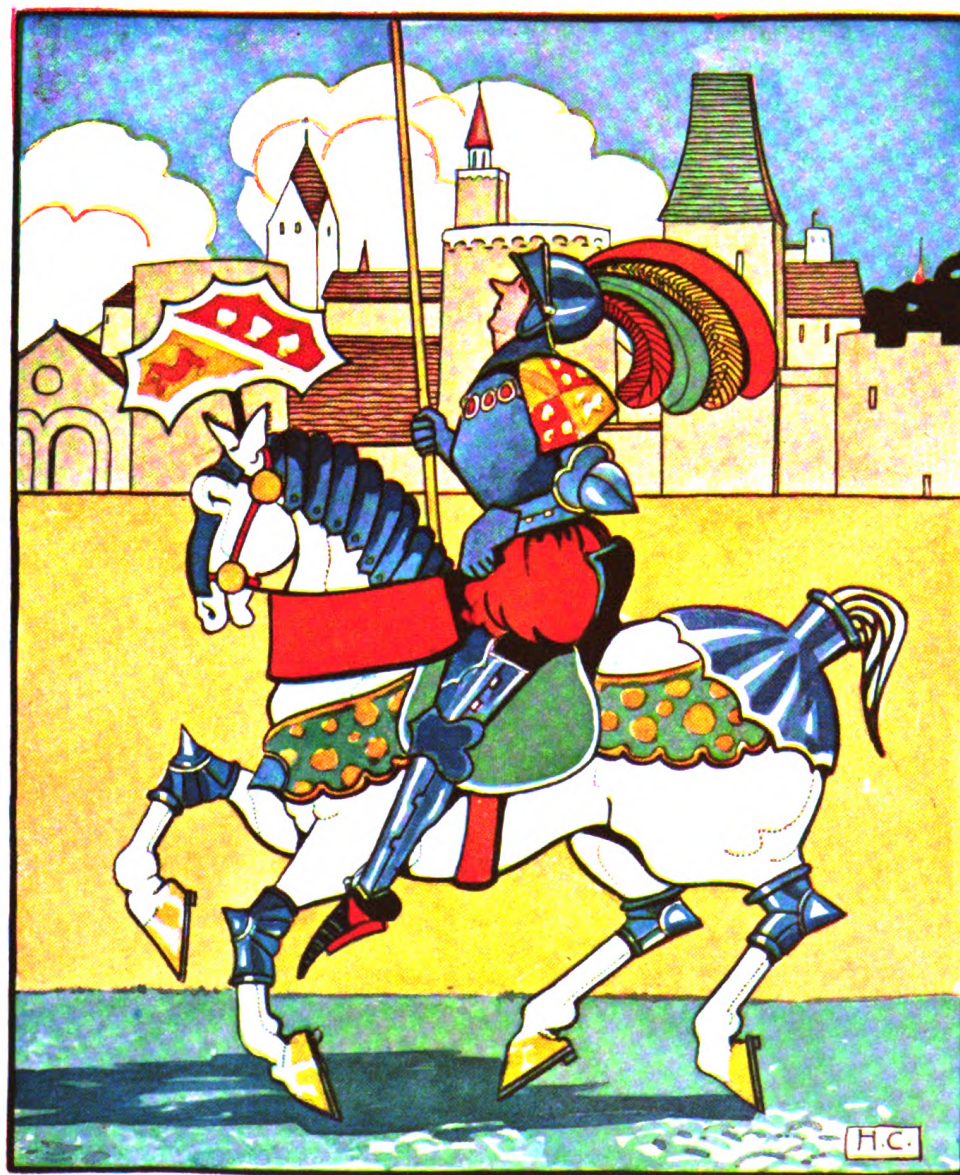
I had the sense then (and I don't know now where I got it from) to go quietly to the

window and pick up my book. They all came rushing into the kitchen; the kitchen was filled with them. Mr. Andrew was there, and his sister, but they were mostly men all shouting and crying out and waving their sticks. At first they didn't see me and then Mr. Andrew suddenly called out "Why, there's the child." I wasn't frightened even then (this was all so much less than so many of my

own imagined adventures) but they stood me in the middle of the floor, held up their lanterns to look at me, and began asking all kinds of questions. The point was that the fugitive, if he had come into the house, must have been heard by me. Had I heard anybody? I shook my head. Where had I been all the time? I had been sitting there by the window reading my book. Had I been there all the time? Yes, I had been there all the time. There was no entrance to the house, save through the kitchen or the front door just beside the window. In any case, he couldn't be in the kitchen, he might be upstairs, so all of them rushed up to see. I could hear them hunting about upstairs, they even, I fancy, broke into Miss Somerset's bedroom, then down they came again and, after a little more discussion, rushed out and up the road.

Mr. Andrew went with them. Nellie had, fortunately for her, joined the crowd with a number of the dancers, and now she and Miss Andrew were left alone with me. They were both of them tremendously excited; what exactly the stranger had done, I could not understand, but it was something very terrible. Forgetting me for a moment, they went upstairs to reassure Miss Somerset, and to see whether any damage had been done. In a moment I was at the cupboard door, and the stranger and I were alone in the room again, as though all those people had never been. He was quieter now he had been given time to breathe, he seemed to have made up his mind what he would do. I am ashamed to say that I robbed Miss Andrew, because I gave him half a loaf of bread and a piece of cold bacon, and all the time I never spoke to him and he didn't say anything to me but just before he went,

he caught me up in his arms, held me very tight, kissed me and, as he put me down, said in his funny broken voice some words in a foreign language that I didn't understand at all, of course, but that meant that he approved of me. Then he was over the window-sill, on the grass, away under the stars, vanished. I hope he reached my mountain and that Black Jack looked after him until all pursuit was over. I don't know; I never heard of him again, but I have a kind of idea that if I met him anywhere, even now, after all these years, I should recognise him. I hope, wherever he is, he is a stranger no longer. Many things that other people would call exciting, have happened to me since then, but to myself, that will always be the most exciting of all, and it is an adventure to tell you the truth, that isn't yet ended.



POEMS

By HUGH CHESTERMAN

PROUD SIR PIM

SIR PIM was proud, uncommon proud;
His friends and relatives allowed
That Proud Sir Pim displayed more pride
Than any other knight beside.

And nought there was could dull or dim
Or tarnish
The splendour of this proud Sir Pim:
His waist was slim, his harness trim,
His helmet shone from tip to brim
Like varnish.

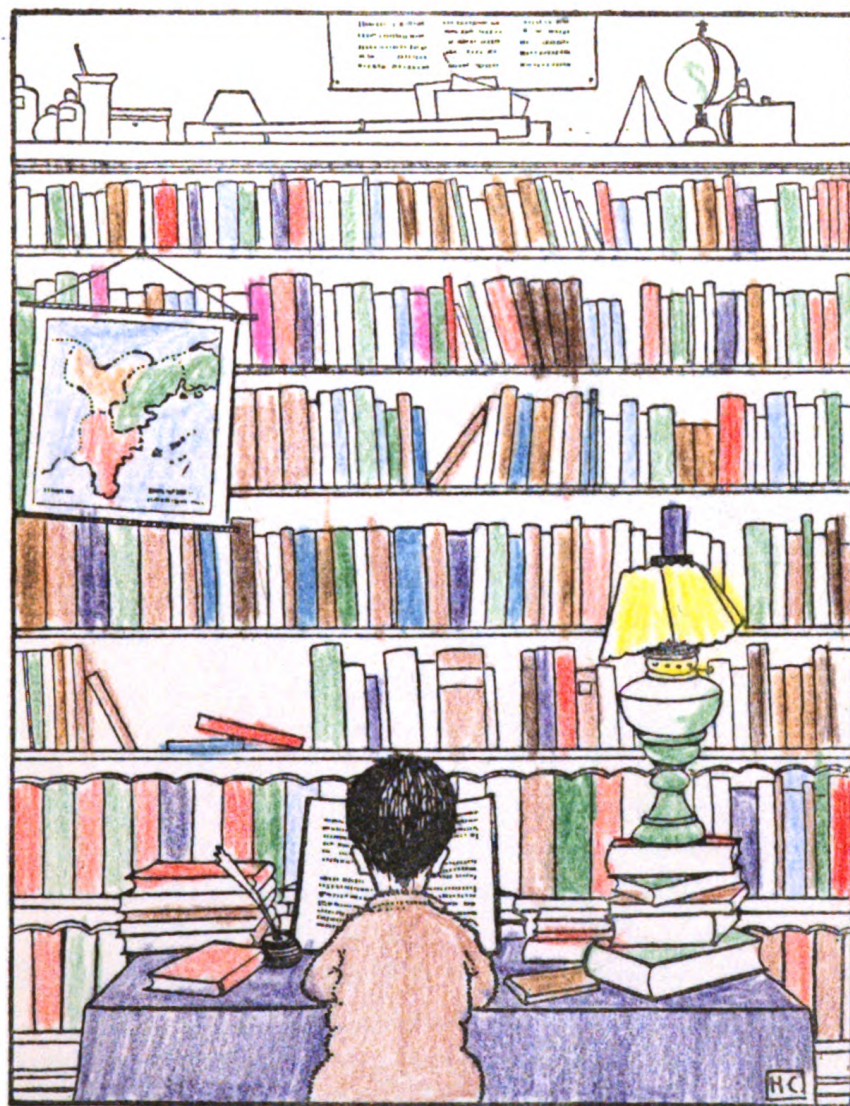
And when he walked or rode abroad
The passers-by were overawed
And little boys and girls would stammer
(With slight regard for English grammar),
"That's him—
That's Proud Sir Pim!"

KNOWLEDGE

I REMEMBER . . .
Twenty shillings in a pound,
Seven days in every week,
And once a year the earth goes round
The staring sun, and Chesapeake
Is *not* a mountain but a bay
Whereto the Susquehanna flows,
And Potomac, and goodness knows
What other streams in U. S. A.!
And twenty quires make a ream,
And grouse, in plural, is not "grice,"
And Watt revealed the use of steam,
And John of Gaunt was married twice,
Canute and Charlemagne were kings,
And Martinmas is mid-November

* * * *

But there are lots and lots of things
I *can't* remember.



Knowledge.

MAGIC CASEMENTS

By MADELEINE NIGHTINGALE



FROM Tony's house the ground slopes north, east, and south, for the house stands upon the spur of a ridge, and away on the left the long range of the Downs shoulder the sky, whilst on the right, miles northward, you can see Blackdown and Hascombe and on a clear day even Leith Hill and Newlands Corner. But due east a little steep hill road wanders away by gorse-strewn commons and under great spreading Sussex oaks, where you meet no one save perhaps a milch goat, trailing its long chain amongst the wayside bushes, or a cow or two wandered from their pasturage and "feeding their way home," as the natives say. And this is, perhaps, Tony's favourite walk. I am not quite sure why he so especially loves it, but I think, maybe, it is because that way lies the Silver Wood. For in the Silver Wood there once befell him a great and wonderful adventure; and the happening of it was in this wise:

It was early May, but the May of a backward year, and only the larches were in "proper green" (as Tony put it), though here and there a silver birch was shaking out her smallest crumpled leaves, and all about the commons and

in the roadside hedges white bushes of blackthorn shone, and the old mushroom man had told Tony this was "blackthorn winter." Then came two blazing days of unexpected summer, and on the second night, just as the clock in the hall struck one, Tony had wakened suddenly into moonlight bright as day and a world become, as it seemed, half Heaven by reason of the music with which it was filled.

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" he whispered, and for an hour lay quivering with the wonder of it, until at last he could bear no longer the loveliness all alone, and, slipping out of bed, crept along the dark passage and scratched softly at his mother's door. This scratching was an invention of his own, because, as he once explained, "The mice scratch and it doesn't wake them, so if they are really asleep I won't disturb them, and if they aren't, why, they'll know it's *me*." To-night, his father's voice answered, prompt and wideawake. "That you, Tony? Come along!" He had crouched down under an eiderdown, and all three had listened until at last the chorus died down into silence, a cock from the valley crew welcome to the coming dawn, and a cow in the byre at the back of the house lowed as if in answer. Then Tony's father had picked him up by the scruff of his pyjamas like a kitten, gathered him in his arms, and carried him back to bed.

"It's the nightingales, old man," said he, "and now to sleep and I'll tell you all about them in the morning."

Accordingly, next day, seated in his father's study, whilst outside the sun shone and beckoned with long beams through the wafting curtains, he heard how Philomel, the nightingale, had come back from his winter quarters in Egypt or Syria or Northern Africa, and was last night

voicing his return; how he loves dense coverts, and how skilfully he hides his nest; how the eggs are five in number, and of a brownish shade; and how, as he grows busy with the feeding and rearing of his young, his song decreases until at the end of the season, just before he leaves our shores, so hoarse has his voice become that he cannot sing at all, but only croak. And lastly, how he sings by day as well as night; only, because a thousand other birds are singing too, one scarcely recognizes him.

Tony had listened, interested and attentive; but when the instruction was over, a book had been taken down from its shelf, and verses more wonderful than Tony had ever heard before—as wonderful, indeed, as the nightingale's songs themselves—were read to him in the wonderful way and wonderful voice which only his father had. "And that's what John Keats thought about 'em, Tony, my son. Some day you shall tell me what *you* think. But, there, off with you into the sunshine, and perhaps they'll sing for you again to-night." So did his father finish.

And Tony had gone, but now all the careful facts of the bird's self and habits had drifted from his mind, and there remained to him only snatches of the poem John Keats had written and some dim realization of its glory and its joy.

In the afternoon he had borrowed the volume, going through the poem stanza by stanza, finding great portions which he in no way understood, but fastening, nevertheless, on the lines that most fascinated him, reading them again and again, until they were unmistakably his own.

"The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

* * * * *



It was a fortnight later when the adventure happened. After the few hot days, the wind had swung anew into the north, and there had followed an extraordinarily cold week, at the end of which Summer asserted herself firmly, and upon this particular afternoon the air was quite sleepily warm.

The blackthorn had all blown away, and on the wayside banks only here and there a last primrose peeped out lonely from its clump of green leaves, a little sorrowful it seemed, for the many brothers and sisters drooped and faded on their stalks at its side. The gorse was blazing though, all the oak-trees were green, and down in the woods there would be bluebells. Five or six larks carolled noisily overhead and Tony, too, was singing as he walked. He had his bow-and-arrow in case he saw buffalo, and over his back was slung a scout's bag. For after tea the prairie nights got chilly, and he needed wood-chips for a fire in his wigwam at the bottom of the garden. He strode with large strides, but silently as befitted an Apache brave (though, for that matter, he cared little that over by Black-



down the Sioux were encamped. Were not the young men of his own tribe within call, should he need them, which was unlikely? Trust an Apache to keep or at any rate extricate himself from danger).

At the bottom of the hill he left the road and struck across the common. A large white goat was cropping grass down in the dip, and he paused to watch it critically.

"A strayed broncho!" said he. "And a fine one, too. I wish I had my lariat." Then he slid his head through his bow, dropped the arrow in its quiver, climbed the stile of the Silver Wood, and promptly forgetting all about Indians, became himself again. For in the woods the flowers, shut out somewhat from the sun, are often weeks later than those of the hedgerows and open fields, and here everywhere was carpeted with primroses and dog violets, and the white stars of the wood anemone.

Tony gave a little crow of delight.

"Oh, I *do* like it!" he said aloud.

Then he threw back his head and stared up into the trees, for somewhere above him he thought he heard a voice say, "So do I." Nor was he mistaken. Astride a big branch that spread out half-way up the oak-trunk sat a small grey man, and Tony recognized him at once. It was the Woodcutter.

"Hello," said Tony.

"Hello," said the Woodcutter, and went on with his work, chopping away with his axe at the bough on which he was perched. But as he chopped at wood *between* the tree-stem and himself, Tony felt a little anxious.

"You mustn't do that, Woodcutter," he said. "When the bough breaks——"

"The cradle will fall," finished the Woodcutter; and even as he spoke the branch cracked loudly. "'Ware heads!" he shouted; and down it came, he with it, almost at Tony's feet.

Tony sprang back in some alarm. He stepped forward again, however, almost immediately, to help the little man to his feet; but the Woodcutter, rather pettishly, motioned him away and proceeded leisurely to brush from his clothes the dirt, grass ends, and dried leaves which clung to them.

"Did it hurt you?" Tony asked, with much feeling.

The little man snorted.

"Try it yourself," he said tartly.

"Well, I did warn you not to cut between the trunk and you," Tony said presently, a little nettled by the other's ungraciousness.

"It makes no difference where I cut," the Woodcutter returned rather dolefully. "I fall just the same. Look at

my head." He turned sideways, and Tony saw that the back of it bulged in two enormous bumps.

"That's why I can't wear a hat. You see, they never quite go down before the next bump bumps them."

"I'm so sorry," Tony said gently. "But I can't help thinking that if only you didn't cut——"

"Oh, don't say it all over again," the Woodcutter cried irritably. "If you're behind, you fall after; if you're before you fall with. And after all, it's soonest over if you fall with."

Tony looked a little bewildered.

"I don't see why you *should* fall after," he said at last.

"You must if you haven't fallen before," retorted the other.

Tony considered awhile.

"But that's a joke," he remarked at last.

"Oh, is it!" said the Woodcutter indignantly. "Try it. You'll soon see."

Tony shook his head. "No, thank you," he said, and then, "I didn't mean *that* kind of joke."

The little man grunted.

"I don't think it's any kind of joke," he said huffily, and Tony, hopeless of explaining, changed the subject.

"Why did you cut such a beautiful branch?" He fingered the bright green leaves regretfully.

"It's for my windows—wood-windows you know. Every wood has windows."

"Windows?" Tony spoke doubtfully, but he pricked his ears as the little man went on.

"Yes. Windows. Magic casements."

Tony's heart began to beat faster.



"For the nightingale? *Their* magic casements, I mean?"

The Woodcutter stared at him.

"Yes, of course," he said. "Whose else?"

"I didn't understand . . . that you make them for yourself, I mean," Tony said slowly. "Can I come and watch?"

The Woodcutter motioned him to shoulder one end of the bough, and raising the other himself, started off down the slope.

"You don't altogether," he said.

"Don't altogether what?"

"Make them yourself. The material is there. You only need to use it."

"Yes," returned Tony after a pause, "I think I see that."

"And that's why it had to be specially beautiful," he went on; "to fit in with the music, I suppose."

The Woodcutter grunted assent and then plodded on in silence.

* * * * *

Now when you have climbed the stile of the Silver Wood, the path, all grass and primroses and violets, runs steeply down for 100 yards or so, and crosses in the dip a little brushwood bridge that spans the boggy bed of a small stream. On the other side you rise again, and almost at once on the left a lane turns at right angles, leading straightly through a plantation of silver birches. If you follow this, you come shortly into meadows, for the wood is narrow here. Fifty yards farther is another lane, cut through great oaks, and one trunk, topped and lonely, lies right across the way. Both these the Woodcutter passed by. The third lane is narrower, and the branches of the trees on either hand spread and so intermingle that, when they are in full summer foliage, the path beneath is dim and cool like the tunnels through the corn and bracken that the rabbits use. To-day, however, since the oak-buds had only just uncurled their crinkly leaves, the sun lay all along it, flecking and dappling it in a pattern of light and shade. And above was the same pattern, but fashioned of the leaves themselves against the sky. The Woodcutter halted for a moment. "Listen!" he said, and far away ahead, very faint and muffled, Tony heard a whistle, thin and sweet and repeated several times. Then came a little burst of gurgling song that set his shoulders wriggling with delight. And then all was still again.

"It's a nightingale!" he cried.

The Woodcutter nodded.

"They love the quiet and lonely places, where no one goes. But *we'll* go, you and I, Tony o' Dreams, and we'll build a window there for them to charm."

Tony stared, for it seemed to him odd that a little rough-

clothed, rough-handed Woodcutter should be speaking in the language of a poet. "Do you know Keats, then?" he asked, and paused, ashamed of his astonishment.

The Woodcutter smiled.

"That's not just John Keats," he said, "it's everyone, boy—everyone, that is, who looks and feels."

"But John Keats *wrote* it," Tony persisted.

"Yes, but Keats only gathered what grows for all of us;



gathered and thought on it and put it into words. It's *ours* as well as his. That's why we love it so."

Tony pondered this very seriously.

"Suppose"—he said—"suppose I gathered something and thought on it; could I ever put it into words—into words, I mean, like those?"

The Woodcutter did not answer at once, and Tony waited patiently, listening as he walked to the soft pad of their feet on the grass, the pipe of an occasional chaffinch,



the coo of a wood-pigeon, the quiet stir of the trees and the rustle of a rabbit here and there amongst the undergrowth.

"I dare say," the little man said at last. "Maybe, they'd come to you somewhere, somehow, as they came to him. I cannot tell." He lowered his end of the branch and suddenly flung his arms wide.

"Listen!" he cried. "Can you hear?"

Tony regarded the strange little figure wonderingly.

"I can hear. Yes. Lots of things," he answered after a while. "The trees and the wind, and the birds and the rabbits; and . . . sometimes I think I can hear the clouds and the flowers and the sunshine. But I can't quite tell what they say."

"*Listen* then," said the Woodcutter again; "listen to them, and one day perhaps you *will* understand the language, so that their words shall come to be your own."

He raised the bough again and trudged off, and Tony, absorbed in his own thoughts, followed in silence until the whistle of another nightingale, quite near at hand, roused him.

The lane now had dwindled to a narrow path, and on either hand all tangled round the grey lichened trunks of the trees was so dense an undergrowth of bramble, honeysuckle, and little springing birches that he and his companion seemed shut out from all the world. But far ahead, at the path's end, a little patch of white gleamed like a pool in a green field.



The Woodcutter pointed to it.

"See!" he cried. "A magic casement! I must frame the sky."

In a moment he had his branch flat upon the ground and was chopping vigorously, measuring, tenoning, fitting, until—so swiftly as to seem indeed magical—the magic casement was complete. Tony laid hands upon one side of its square frame to help bear it to its destination, but the Woodcutter shook his head.

"The nightingales know *me*," he said, "but I must go



alone. When it is fixed, perhaps for you also the charm will charm. Wait."

And so Tony waited, sitting by the side of the path on a mat of new white wood-chips with his back against a tree.

Then quite suddenly the nightingales called him. Springing to his feet, and flinging away his bow and quiver because they hindered him, he raced down the path as fast as his legs could carry him.

At the end of it, round the little patch of sky, was the magic casement exactly as the Woodcutter had made it; but the Woodcutter was gone. There was no one here now but himself and the nightingales; and the nightingales, as they had sung that night when he heard them first, were singing all together, so that the very air was quivering with music. For fully a minute Tony stood quiet, quivering too, his hand on the window-sill, almost afraid to look. And then he looked, and knew that it was all right. For him also the charm had charmed. For in front of him stretched long, shining sands and beyond them a great sea. And the sea was all spangled with wave crests that

the moonlight caught. And across both sands and sea a silver way ran, broad and straight, to the horizon and then onward endlessly into the beyond. But sometimes as he looked the bright silver of it blurred for a moment as the spray-scurd drove across it like a cloud. Some of the spray drove inland too, for Tony's face grew moist with it, and when he touched his lips and fingers with his tongue the taste of them was like salt.

"The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

he chanted softly.

Then he clambered upon the sill, balanced for a moment or two with his legs dangling, dropped through, and set off slowly across the lonely sands. Far ahead he could see, in the moonlight, line after line of breakers and, a little nearer, the ebbing, flowing ripple of their fringe. Here and there about the shore were strewn great rocks, which, as he approached, towered jet black against the violet sky and threw shadows as black as themselves upon the sands below. Some had little pools around their base, and at one of them he stopped, doffed shoes and stockings, and, standing with his tired feet cool in the soft water, stared thoughtfully across this new and wonderful sea that he had found.

"Perilous?" he said at last. "The billows don't roar very angrily, and it's too beautiful to be perilous, I think."

"Ah, but you're thinking backwards way, Master Tony; it's perilous just because it *is* so beautiful."

Tony jumped. He had felt himself so utterly alone, and yet the voice sounded at his very elbow. Then he stared



in amazement, for at his side stood a little old woman in a mob cap and a long grey cloak, half dusty, half sheeny, as cobwebs are. In her hand she carried a kind of wand with a bright end to it which shone just like a star.

"Are you the Queen Moon?" he asked her, remembering his Keats; but she burst into a laugh and began to dance with most astonishing agility, wetting him all over as she splashed the water with her long, sharp-toed shoes.

"Queen Moon, indeed!" cried she, and pointed to the sky. "Not I! Don't you see? The Queen Moon is on her throne, clustered about with all her starry fays." She shook her wand in his face. "As for this! Did you think it was a star? Look! It's an elf-stone! Turn your coat, Tony, turn your coat! I'm a fairy."

Tony had often heard of elf-stones, and once his father had seen one. A cow had been found dead in the pasture, and the old cowman had brought up to the house a little

bright piece of flint, triangular and barbed on each side like an arrow head. "'Tis elf-shot she be, surelye, and never a mark on her to show," he had said. "But there 'twas, alongside—the fairies' arrow-point." And the old fellow had begged that he might keep it, hanging it round his neck as an amulet against a like fate falling on himself. Here, sure enough, was the flint just as Tony had pictured it. He took the wand rather gingerly and examined it, giving it back to her at last, with a little laugh. "I'm not afraid of fairies," he said stoutly. "So I won't need to turn my coat. But who *are* you, then? Queen *Mab*?"

"No, nor yet Queen *Mab*," she retorted, mimicking his accent; "just *Mistress Mab*, an it please you."

She dropped a little curtsey and her grey cloak spread out all about the water and dripped a hundred tiny silver rivulets as she rose again to her small height.

"But everyone *says* Queen," he persisted.

"Everyone is wrong, then," she answered, and paused and heaved a sigh.

"And yet," she went on, "Queen *Mab* it *is*, perhaps—Queen by courtesy. But Queen only of men's dreams."

Tony made a low bow, stepped out of his pool and dropped upon one knee.

"Then," said he, "at least you are *my* Queen."

"And why?"

"Because," he said, rather red and shy, "because of my name, you see. Tony o' Dreams, they call me. So I must be *your* knight, mustn't I?"

"I see," she said gently, and both were silent, she as well as he, gazing seaward to the fringe of foam. Suddenly she laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Well then, small knight," she cried, "and what of the perilous seas?"

Tony shivered. "I'm not afraid," he said, "only . . . they are so beautiful. *Must* all that's beautiful be perilous too?"

"But of course! Perilous—to be adventured—to be tried and made your own!"

"Oh but perilous? Does perilous mean that?" he asked quickly.

"Why, yes—what else?"

Tony pondered.

"I thought quite differently," he said at last. "I thought it meant dangerous."

She caught him up almost before the words were out of his mouth. "Ah, no! Not dangerous. Beauty—real beauty is safer, surer than all other things in all the world. Remember that, Tony, now and always. Come, will you sail these perilous seas with me for faery lands, so lost, so lost—for faery lands forlorn?"

He looked at her without speaking, and suddenly she began to sing:

"Away, away and away we go,
Away by ourselves, away!
For it's somewhere hid 'twixt the sea and sky
That the long-lost lands of faery lie,
And I know if we sail there, you and I,
We shall find them one fine day."

As she ended, the moon slid behind a cloud, and in the sudden darkness she tugged his hand.

"Fly, Tony! Spread your wings and fly!" she cried, "lest we grow old and tired before we come there."

Eagerly he stretched out his arms, straining up on tip-toe. In a moment the ground was gone from beneath his feet and, lightly as a bird, he was gliding onward through the air, the scud wet upon his face again and the sweet salt smell of the sea growing stronger and stronger as he breathed.

He shut his eyes the better to enjoy the delight of it, and it seemed quite a long time later when Queen Mab pulled his arm again to rouse him.

"Now you can hear the billows," she said.

Listening, he caught the rhythmic roar of them deep down below, and clutched her hand more tightly for the thoughts they raised.

"You're frightened!" she jeered.

"No," he answered simply. "I love it. That's all."

"Come, then, and we'll sail."

They began to drop rapidly, and just as Tony's feet touched ground the moon came out again and showed him the foam-fringe of the sea curling and glistening round his ankles. A yard or so away, quivering in water almost deep enough to float her, lay a little boat in which Queen Mab already sat.

"Push off, Sir Tony Knight," she said, "and spring aboard."

He pushed and clambered, falling perhaps rather clumsily over the gunwale, but picking himself up without so much as a rub of his bruised elbows and settling the oars in the rowlocks neatly, as a Cornishman's son should.

"That's right, Tony! Pull! Pull hard!" his companion

whispered. "For on these faery seas, most often whilst we strive it is that the winds blow us where we will."

Tony looked back at her over his shoulder.

"*I am* pulling," he said. "But only a very little, I think. The boat moves of itself."

She leaned forward and pinched his cheek.

"And what is the wind but your spirit," she demanded, "decked in a lovelier name?"

He shook his head.

"I don't understand, Queen Mab," he said, but went on pulling long even strokes as his father had taught him, until the soft creak-creak of the rowlocks and the drip of the water from the blades made a sleepy music, and he fell to humming softly to keep himself awake. Even this, it seemed, began to fail, and shipping his oars, he turned at last to his companion to tell her how tired he was and to ask whether it would be unknighly if for two minutes he should curl up at the bottom of the boat and sleep his sleepiness away.

And then he rubbed his eyes in amazement and all his sleepiness passed as completely as the spray scud passed across the moonshine, for her seat was empty and he was all alone.

"Queen Mab!" he shouted. "Queen Mab! Ahoy!" But there was no answer except the roar of the surf far behind him, and the lap of the water against the sides of the boat. A little tremor took him, and clambering to the bows he knelt there, staring ahead. Then he stretched out both his hands and spoke:

"Oh, faery lands—faery lands forlorn. It wasn't I that lost you, was it? If it was, I'm sorry, but I've come to find

you now. Don't hide yourselves away from me too long."

And all in a moment it was day again and the sun was shining. And when he stared—out of the horizon, it seemed—rose a long low bank of green. At first he thought it was faery land itself coming towards him in answer to his call. Then he realized it was a great wave, and with a rush came back the memory of a certain day last year. He was in his uncle's yacht. A storm had overtaken them and, huddled behind a hatch, he had sat with his father, listening to the shrieks of the wind and the deafening rattle of every stay and rope the little vessel carried, and wondering whether it was really he who sat there, or some boy in a book. And how, poking his head round the hatch, he had seen just such a wall of green water rushing down upon him then. The yacht had buried her nose in it and the green had sluiced along the deck on either side, churning as it went, and poured over the stern. In just such a way did his own little boat now bury *her* nose, only not her nose merely, but the boat and he and all went in. And the water parted itself into a square opening, and as he tumbled through—lo and behold, it was the magic casement; and here was the wood again, and it wasn't the bottom of the sea at all, but just his heap of wood-chips from which he picked himself up, a little dazed and confused. And the magic casement slid away from him along its "verdurous glooms and winding mossy way," until it was once more only a pale patch of light where the path's end touched the sky.

His bow and quiver hung in a bramble just where he had flung them when he raced away, and he gazed at them

a long while before he gathered and slung them on his back.

A nightingale whistled somewhere to the left. He waited for its burst of song, standing listening with his head flung back. Up the path the magic casement seemed to beckon him, but as the music ended he knew suddenly that he was tired and hungry.

"Oh, nightingales!" he cried, "I know! I know! And beyond, the seas *are* very perilous. I shall come again. But, you see, I'm not a very valiant knight. Even as it was, I failed. I was so tired, I stopped rowing and almost fell asleep. And now I'm tireder than ever. And perhaps I was nearly there."

He blinked furiously because his tiredness made his eyes blur a little, and he was afraid he might think he was crying.

"I—I shall shoot buffalo on my way home," he said. Then he filled his scout's bag with the white wood-chips and set off.



POEMS

By HUGH CHESTERMAN

SETTING THE THAMES ON FIRE

YOU'VE heard of Tovey Trant, Esquire,
Who tried to set the Thames on fire
And would not be dissuaded
From dropping lighted matches in,
With candle-ends and paraffin
And all the things that servants use
For lighting fires that refuse
To burn unaided?
He started his experiment
At Erith on the coast of Kent,
And when it wouldn't burn he tried
At Purfleet on the Essex side
(For Tovey *was* a trier).
He tried at Cleeve (near Nettlebed),
And then again at Maidenhead,
But all the people watching said,
"Go higher, Trant, go higher!"
So up he moved to Hurley Mill
And then to Caversham, and still
The stupid stream would not ignite;
Although he tried with all his might
He *could* not set the Thames alight,
And that there's no denying.

He tried at Stoke, and then a spot
Near Wallingford, and Wolvercot,
Again at Bablock, and so up
To Shifford, Rushy Lock and Thrupp,
And Inglesham. At Water Hay
He neared the source, and there, they say,
Poor Tovey's still a-trying.

HUGH CHESTERMAN



Setting the Thames on fire.

THE WANDERER

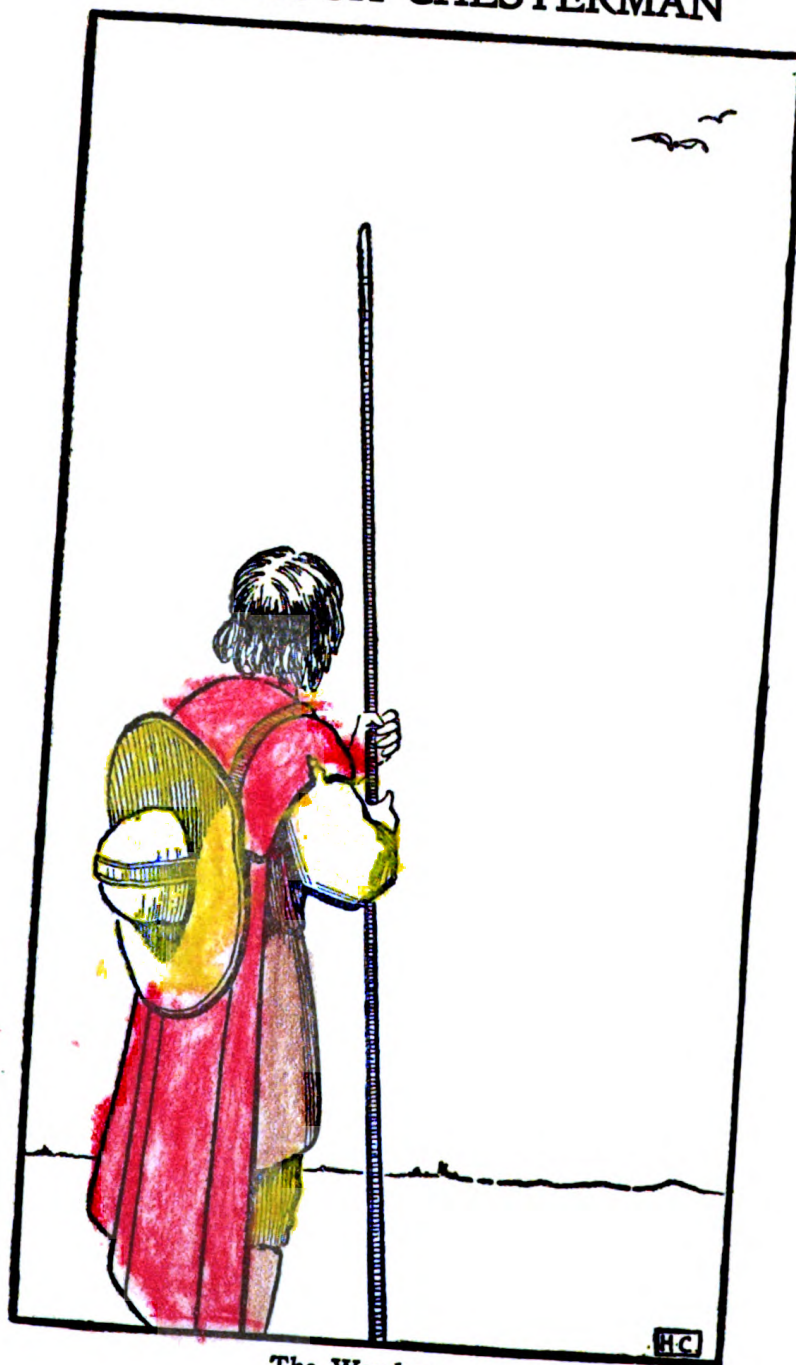
WHAT open ways before him lie!
High hills where Earth with Heav'n meets,
And shining downs where plovers cry,
Or idle towns with crooked streets.

But vain to ask which way have gone
Those vagrant feet—for no one knows
What urgent star compels him on,
Nor whence he came—nor where he goes.

HUGH CHESTERMAN

BY HUGH CHESTERMAN

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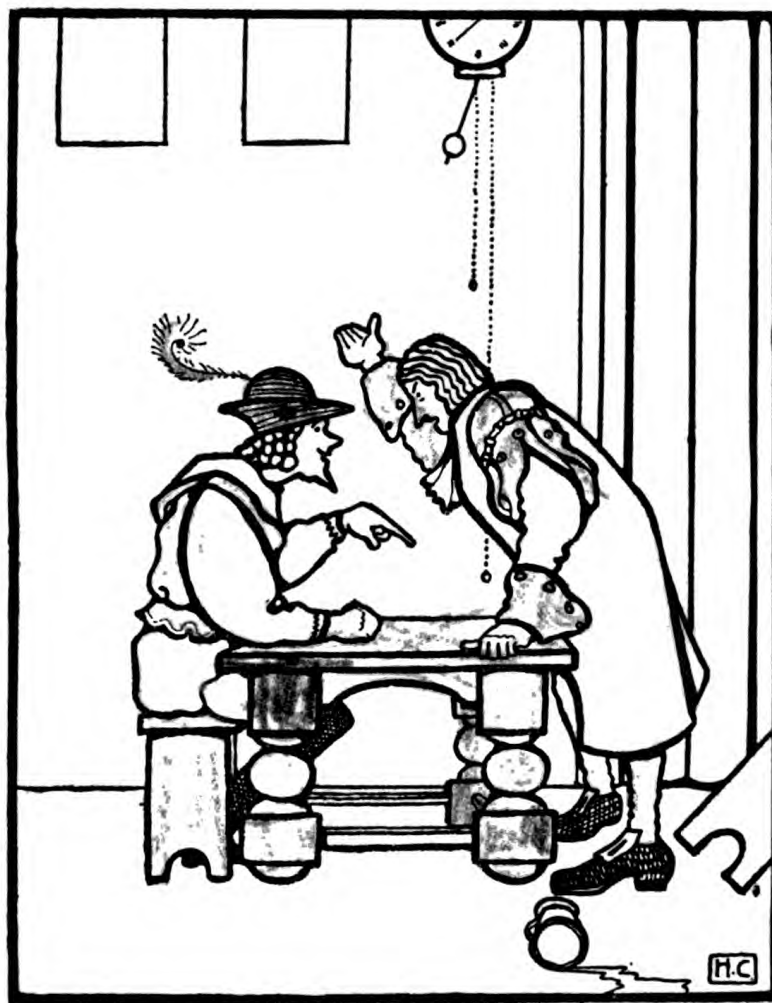


The Wanderer.

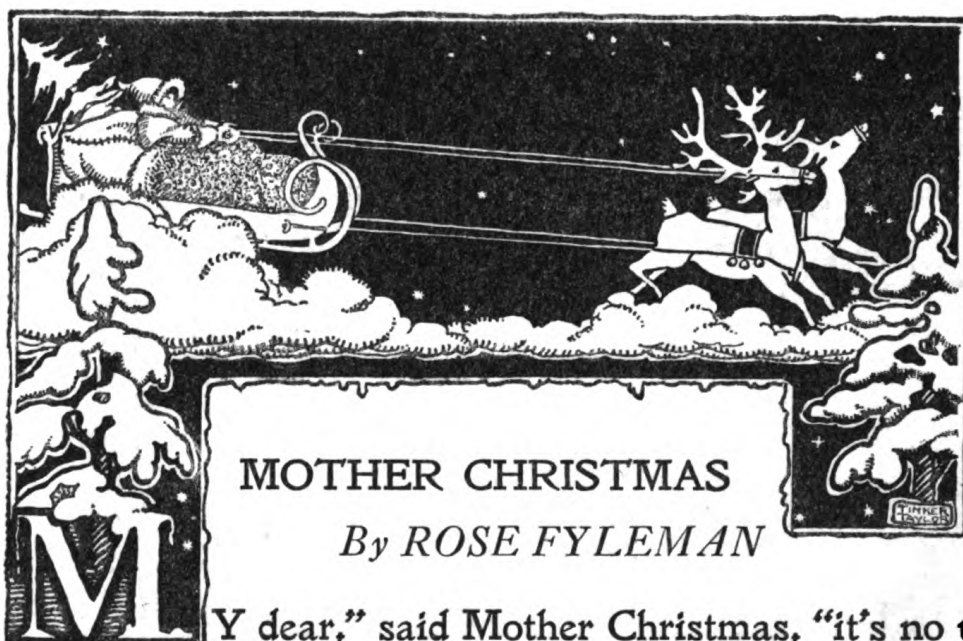
THE WRANGLERS

THERE was a man of Languedoc
Who had a friend in Wapping;
For seven hours by the clock
They'd argue without stopping;
They'd talk of this and tell of that,
And contradict each other flat
On any given topic.
And if the one did introduce
A subject deep or too abstruse,
The other fell to sharp abuse,
And tempers would grow "tropic."
"I'd sooner argue with a block!"
Protested he from Languedoc.
"For all I care, my friend, you can,"
Replied the wrathful Wapping man.

HUGH CHESTERMAN



The Wranglers.



MOTHER CHRISTMAS

By ROSE FYLEMAN

"Y dear," said Mother Christmas, "it's no use. You can't go."

"Nonsense," said Father Christmas. "Of course I shall go. I've never missed yet. The children would never get over it."

"Then let *me* go," said Mother Christmas. "It's absurd for you to think of it with a cold like that on you. I can manage perfectly. After all, it was I who packed up all the presents and I know exactly where to take them."

"And how are you going to manage the reindeer, I'd like to know, with all those telegraph wires about?" said her husband. "No, my dear, it's a man's job. I shall be all right. Mix me a hot drink and I'll have a five minutes' snooze by the fire before I start."

Mother Christmas said no more, but there was an odd gleam in her eye as she mixed Father Christmas's glass of hot lemon and water. It's my belief she put something



It made him very sleepy.

more than lemon into the hot water; however that may be, it certainly made him very sleepy. The five minutes' snooze lengthened into ten—fifteen—twenty. Mother Christmas was moving about the room very quietly and softly. She wrapped herself up in all manner of woollies, and at last put on her husband's great red coat and hood all trimmed with white fur, and stole quietly out of the door.

Plup, plup, plup—there was a noise of light hoofs flying over the snow.

Plup, plup, plup—softer and softer it grew. At last it died away.

Father Christmas still slept by the fire.

When he woke up it was quite dark, and it didn't take him many minutes to realize what had happened. He hurried to the reindeer shed—empty.

The snow was falling thickly. He was terribly upset. What was to be done? He had no other sleigh and no other reindeer, and of course it was impossible to follow his wife down to earth on foot.

Finally he decided to ring up the Fairy Queen. She was always so kind and helpful.

"Please, your Majesty," he said when he had got through, "I'm nearly distracted. My wife insisted upon taking out the Christmas presents because I had such a cold, and I'm so afraid she may get lost, or stick somewhere."

"Dear, dear," said the Queen. "Hold the line a minute while I tell the head of the look-out department to put on his million-horse-power-wireless - radio - telescope - spec -



"She's caught on some telegraph wires."

tacles in order to see where she is." In a minute or two came news.

"She's caught on some telegraph wires and the reindeer and the sleigh are all tangled up in them. He can see them quite plainly. What would you like me to do?"

"Oh dear, oh dear," said poor Father Christmas. "I'm afraid the only thing to do is to cut the wires, and the wire-cutter is in the tool-box under the seat of the sledge. She'll never think of that."

"Would you like me to send her a message?" said the Queen.

"Oh, your Majesty, if you *would* . . ." said Father Christmas.

So the Queen sent down a messenger at once with instructions about the wire-cutter.

Mother Christmas was in a dreadful tangle. She simply could not get out, and the reindeer were kicking and plunging in a most troublesome way.

Large snowflakes were falling. They fell on to Mother Christmas's hair and nose and spectacles.

She put up her hand to brush one off her ear.

"Hi," said a tiny voice. "You mustn't treat me like that. I'm a Queen's Messenger."

Mother Christmas took off her spectacles and wiped them and put them on again.

A tiny dapper little person sat on the rail of the sleigh. He really did look rather like a snowflake in his snug white cap and ulster, but he was very much alive.

"The wire-cutter's in the tool-box under the seat," he said, and was off like a flash. He wanted to get home to

bed I expect. And so Mother Christmas got back safely after all, and she had delivered all the presents too. You may guess what a welcome she received from her husband and what a lot the reindeer had to talk about to one another before *they* went to sleep.

"There must have been a terrible gale last night," people said on Christmas morning. "Quite a lot of telegraph wires are down."

The head of the listening department in Fairyland heard them and told the Queen what they said. How she laughed!



FUNNY LOO

By *EDITH SITWELL*

“**W**HOSE tears are running
Down the window-pane?”
“Never mind,” said funny Loo—
“It is the King of Spain
Who is weeping tears of gold
To wake the crocus cold” . . .
Then, running like bunnies in the warm spring rain
My thoughts go lumping out to Timbuctoo,
They steal gold cherries from a pirate crew,
They steal golden wool from the trees for you—
Then through the green fields of corn go running home to
Loo.



"Whose tears are running
Down the window-pane?"

A THING TO BE EXPLAINED

By LAURENCE HOUSMAN

WHEN Professor Braintree and his granddaughter Elfrida took a walk together, there was only one thing in which they were alike: they both took short steps. But even when they thus agreed, they did it for different reasons: he because he was so old, she because she was so small. And in that point of likeness, which had two such different reasons at the back of it, you get a picture of their characters—they were as different as different could be, and yet they got on together. It may have been that each had a way of appearing to pay attention while the other talked, and so made good company together; or it may simply have been that Elfrida liked him because he was so old, and that he liked Elfrida because she was so young; it is a great relief, at times, to get away from yourself by being with something quite different.

As they walked together Elfrida's voice seemed to come up to him out of the ground, and his voice seemed to her to come from the trees; yet it was really just the other way, for he had his mind in the ground, and she had her mind in the trees; and his words were pebbles of wisdom, dug up by long experience and worth a great deal, and hers were like loose fluttering leaves blown down from the trees, and worth nothing because they meant nothing, except that she was happy at being alive. The Professor wasn't



happy at being alive; but he didn't want to die, all the same.

And all this time they had been taking short steps together, going through the wood, and each looking at things in their own way, and having their own names for them.

"Oh, Grandpapa!" cried Elfrida suddenly. "Did you see? That was a fairy!"

"No, it wasn't, my dear, it was a tiger-moth. Its proper name is—you wouldn't remember its proper name if I told you."

"Does it have babies?" inquired Elfrida.

"No, my dear, it has eggs; but we don't eat them."

But Elfrida had seen something which seemed to her much bigger than a tiger-moth, and the thought of eggs disappointed her.

"Do fairies only have eggs?" she asked anxiously.

"Fairies don't have anything," replied her grandfather: "they don't exist. They only live in story-books. When you come back to London you shall begin to learn natural history; then you won't think about fairies any more."

"But Grandpapa," said Elfrida, "how do you know there are no fairies?"

"Because," said he, "if there were fairies I should have discovered them."

From which remark the reader will perceive that though a very wise and learned, he was also a very conceited old man.

Perhaps he had a right to be, for he was one of the most celebrated living scientists of his day, though his day is now over; and he had discovered a great many things about nature—animal nature, and bird nature, and insect nature—that had never been discovered before. He was

so great that correspondents, writing to him from all over the world, had to put after his name the magic letters O.M., which is the Buddhist word for God, I believe, but in our language means something a little different.

He was rich, and he lived in a large house on the borders of Richmond Park, where his study looked out upon trees. And in it he had microscopes and spectrographs, and dictaphones, and a lot of other instruments which, if I tried to name them, I should get wrong. But they helped him to hear things, and see things, and know things more minutely than they had ever been heard or seen or known before. It was said that he was the only man in the world as yet who had been able to see an atom, and hear the sound of an electron; and as these are about a million times smaller than anything you or I have ever seen, and make less noise than the smallest flea when it is dead, it is no wonder he should have thought that, if there were fairies, he would have discovered them.

All the same, if this is a true story, Professor Braintree was wrong. But it does not follow that he was mad, though to his dying day he believed that if it was true mad he must have been.

And now, having taken all these short steps to be in the Professor's whereabouts, we can get on with the story. The next day he went back to his house at Richmond, leaving Elfrida with her relatives. She was to return three days later. And grandfather and grandchild, being parted, each made the best of their time; but they no longer kept step together, as news from Elfrida will presently tell.

The Professor, from the moment of his return, was kept very busy with his correspondence, which had got into

arrears—so busy, in fact, that when on the evening of the second day a letter arrived from Elfrida he had not time to open it, and so it came about that he did not read it till the morning of her arrival.

The Professor was working at his microscope when his secretary, Miss Tuckey, came in with the letters, last night's and this morning's. He had been seeing wonderful things in it; but when he looked up he saw nothing distinctly, for his eyes were feeble, and a large glass case of stuffed birds standing in the window appeared only as a haze of colour until he put on one of his two pairs of spectacles, those which he used for looking at things from a distance. Then he saw that Miss Tuckey had a smut on her nose, and told her so; for he very much liked being on the spot himself and correcting others, and did not mind being rude about it.

Miss Tuckey wiped the smut off her nose, and giving him his letters waited to receive instructions. For that he had to put on his reading-glasses; and once more Miss Tuckey became a blur, and could have had as many smuts as she liked on her nose without his seeing one of them. This changing of glasses always took up a great deal of his day; but to-day it was going to matter rather more than usual, which is why I mention it.

Having, in about half an hour, disposed of all his business letters, he came at last to Elfrida's. It was in a pink envelope, and it had a scent of violets; and as he opened it and unfolded the letter, a green leaf dropped out—just an ordinary green leaf from a tree. He took it up and examined it, and knew it at once. "What is she sending me this botanical specimen for, I wonder?" he said. "A

leaf of the hornbeam, *Carpinus betulus*, if I am not mistaken."

Then he looked at the letter, but Elfrida's handwriting, which at the best of times was bad, when she was excited became almost unreadable—by him, at any rate.

Handing it over to Miss Tuckey, he told her to read it to him, and this is what she read:

"DEAREST GRANDPAPA,

"I am coming back to-morrow. I have had a lovely time. So did Benjy; we went everywhere together, but he always would go into the water, and I had to stay out.

["Benjy is the dog, I believe," explained the Professor.]

"That was wrong of him, wasn't it? To-day in the wood I saw a tree full of fairies; it was wonderful. Benjy was barking at them, and they didn't mind. But when I came they all climbed up and hid behind the leaves; and I waited till one came out again—quite close I was then. If I'd had a butterfly net I could have caught him easily. And I send you a leaf off the tree, so as to show you it was a real one, and not what you call my 'imagination.'

[The Professor made a dry noise; it couldn't be called a laugh. "Oh!" said he, "so that's what the botanical specimen is for. . . . Yes?" Miss Tuckey went on reading.]

"Please keep it till I come, then I will tell you all about it."



"I saw a tree full of fairies."

The Professor gave an uncomfortable wriggle, and rubbed the back of his neck.

"Miss Tuckey," he said, "I wish you would not leave that door open! There's a dreadful draught at my back."

"It isn't open, sir," replied Miss Tuckey.

"Well, there's a draught somewhere—quite a wind! It seemed to come all of a sudden. And there! it has blown Miss Elfrida's leaf away, that was here only a moment ago. Put the screen round me; then perhaps I shan't feel it."

Miss Tuckey went and arranged the screen, and while she did so he drew out his writing materials and began to settle to his morning's work. "Is that all the letter?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, except she sends her love."

Then for a moment he remembered the leaf, and looked to see where it had fallen. But it was nowhere in sight, and being of no importance, in another moment he had forgotten it.

Miss Tuckey made final arrangements for his comfort: she put his papers in order and within reach, then made up the fire, and because the sun was shining drew down the green venetian blinds, so that the room remained in pleasant gloom. Then she put the electric reading-lamp and the telephone by his side, and having switched on the light, which he preferred, left him to his work.

This so absorbed him that he was entirely unaware of being looked at. Some people feel it instinctively, others don't. But perhaps it needs to be the eye of a human being. We should not, perhaps, know that a cow was looking at

us; and if a flea looked at us, still less; a queen very likely would not know that she was being looked at by a cat.

But this wasn't a cat, or a cow, or a flea; it was something quite different. Those who have seen anything like it before will, perhaps, recognize it from my description: and how could I describe it if I had not seen it myself?

If we sat where the Professor was sitting, this is how it would appear to us: first, over the far end of the writing-table, a pair of strange eyes rather prominent, polished, shining. Dark and bird-like they stared at him out of a small green face, that looked funny but wasn't human. Out of the head sprouted two long horns that curved and waved like feelers, this way and that, and the rest was all of a piece. The creature was a curious mixture of beetle, bird, and grasshopper; it had a cover, but it did not wear clothes; its colour from head to foot was bright green.

With great interest and curiosity it stood looking at the Professor, but apparently without understanding; and presently, as if to get a nearer view of him, it moved slowly round the writing-table till it stood opposite to him.

The Professor, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, paid no attention. The only noise in the room was the soft scratching of a quill pen.

Presently the creature smacked its lips, and began making a soft jabber to itself, not much louder than the whip of leaves on a window-pane. If you have heard a starling nibbling its beak on a fine spring day—that is the sort of sound the creature made.

The Professor, thinking that he heard something he ought not to hear, looked up through his reading-glasses, and could not believe his eyes.

This, of course, must be the fault of the glasses, for it was quite impossible that he should see in front of him a small green figure with eyes in its head, which appeared to be resting claw-like fingers upon his writing-table, while dancing up and down upon its toes, and looking altogether rather pleased with itself and rather puzzled at him.

So in great haste the Professor changed his glasses, and looked again. To his horror and consternation the creature was still there.

The Professor at once took up the scientific attitude. Though it was a great shock to him for his eyes to be seeing something which could not be there, it was still capable of explanation.

"Dear me, now!" he said to himself. "This is most extraordinary. Let me think! How many cups of green tea did I have this morning?"

And hardly had he put the question than the creature spoke—made a noise, that is to say:

"Sik-sik-sik-sik-sik-sik-sik!"

It sounded like a blackbird flying away through the trees.

"Six, I believe it was," said the Professor; then he started. "Did that thing speak?"

And immediately, if speaking it can be called, the thing spoke again, and having begun, went on, paying very little attention to him:

"Chwee-e-weet! Chick-a-wee! Chick-a-wee! Chip-chip-chip-chick-a-wee!"

This persistence of the hallucination made the Professor realize that the situation was serious. "I must be ill!" he

said to himself, made a dive for the telephone, and rang up without pause, till the exchange heard him.

"Station 1228, please—yes, 1, double 2, 8!"

And as he said it, that creature, that figment of his imagination, took up and repeated the sound.

"Two-eight! two-eight! Eight - eight - eight - eight - eight!"

This was not like a blackbird, it was like a nightingale. The Professor was getting more and more frightened; to be in such a state of health was terrible. Then, to his relief, a voice came down the telephone.

"Is Doctor Locum——?" he began. "Oh, is that you, Doctor? Will you come and see me at once? . . . Braintree, Professor Braintree. Yes—most urgent. I'm afraid I've—broken down."

The Doctor had not quite caught him. "No, no, not a blood-vessel—worse! Do come at once! Don't lose a moment. . . . What?"

But the Doctor had already gone, presumably was upon his way.

"What? what? what? what? what?"

It was that thing talking again! The Professor fixed it with a stare which tried to be sensible. He knew that it did not exist. Why, then, must he go on seeing it, hearing it? He made a great effort of will: shut it out of his sight, diverted his attention, went back to his writing. He dipped his pen.

The horrible little creature watched him, imitated him, leaned over, dipped its finger in the inkpot, and flipped the ink over his paper.

In his terror, to avoid thinking himself mad, the Professor was magnanimous. "There! I did that!" he said.

He looked across; the creature had disappeared. Will-power was having its effect.

But scarcely had he begun to congratulate himself on that fact, when over his shoulder came the horned head.

He started away from it in irrepressible disgust. "Get out!" he cried.

The creature made a dive, and disappeared again. Once more he began to feel relief, when suddenly from a corner of the room he heard it tapping at the typewriter, and as it tapped it imitated the sound. It sounded almost, but not quite, like: "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppercorns." But it couldn't be actually those words: *words*, no! If he began actually hearing it say words—sentences with a meaning—the state of his mind would be worse than ever.

The Professor picked up his penwiper and threw it; and sportively, as though it were playing a game with him, the green imp ducked and disappeared.

A moment later it had hold of him by the toe. The Professor gave a despairing howl, and sprang up into his chair. Another of his senses was gone; not only did he see and hear this thing which did not exist—he had felt it as well. "If this goes on much longer," he said to himself, "I shall go stark, staring mad."

But even as he spoke the imp's active and ever-shifting interest had gone elsewhere. Twisting and pirouetting across the room, it came suddenly on the case of stuffed birds standing in the window, and stopped, transfixed with astonishment.



Net in hand, the Professor advanced.

Then it tapped upon the glass case, and after a close scrutiny began trying, with bird-like sounds and a flapping motion of the hands, to coax the occupants back to life.

The Professor stood and listened spellbound; this was getting worse and worse, for now the creature was showing sympathy; it was saying things that meant something.

"Chick-a-wake! Weet-weet! Oh, why? Tickle 'em up! Two-to-eat! Two-to-eat! Eat-eat-eat! Quick, quick! Josaphat! Josaphat! Drink-and-eat! Wake-up!"

This advance of the green imp in the direction of speech had upon the Professor only the effect of making his own mind descend into the depth. The more sane, the more understanding this creature of his imagination appeared to be, the more obviously was he himself the victim of a delusion. He knew, he knew for certain, that such a thing could not really exist. And yet by the evidence of all his senses it did.

And then, all at once, he got a bright idea: granted that it was an illusion, of which momentarily he was the victim, then, perhaps, all that was necessary was to adapt himself to the fantasy, while its power was upon him; to play up to it, to behave as though it were real, to do as he would do if a hornet, or a beetle, or a butterfly, or a bat had got into the room; to catch it and kill it, and make a specimen of it. If he could only reduce it to the condition of a specimen, he left quite sure that the hallucination would go and the scientific balance of his mind be restored.

And there, close at hand, lay the means, the instrument with which to experiment—a large green butterfly net on a bamboo cane, standing in the corner rack behind him.

The creature was still looking into the case of stuffed birds; it had its back to him. Net in hand, the Professor advanced cautiously, intent on capture. Catching sight of his reflection in the glass the imp turned and fled; it jumped on to the writing-table, jumped on to the back of his chair, jumped over the screen and vanished.

There came a knock at the door. Miss Tuckey entered.

"I beg your pardon," she said. "I thought I heard—something. Did you call, sir?"

The Professor stood, butterfly net in hand, rather at a loss how to account for himself. He was not going to tell Miss Tuckey that he was mad, whatever he might have to tell the Doctor.

"No, no," he said, giving the net a flourish as he spoke. "I was only just practising. As a matter of fact, a butterfly has got into the room—a rare one, I think—and I was trying to catch it. I fancy that now it has gone behind that screen—will you look, Miss Tuckey? . . . Will you drive it out? Don't be afraid; it won't bite you."

Miss Tuckey smiled to herself at the idea of being afraid of a butterfly; the Professor did say curious things sometimes, old age had made him a little eccentric.

She went behind the screen; the Professor stood expectant, very much interested. Miss Tuckey had pulled out her handkerchief, and was flapping it. "No," she said, "I don't think anything's here."

"Oh, thank you, it doesn't matter, then," said the Professor. "By the way, I'm expecting the Doctor. Will you send him up when he comes?"

Miss Tuckey departed, and he was alone again—alone with his hallucination. Clearly, she had seen nothing. He

wondered whether it was still there, waiting for him to treat it as though it were real.

He advanced cautiously, and peeped. Then suddenly at his back he heard the cry of the spring peewit. "Pewee! Pewee! Just-look-at-me! Just-look-at-me!" And there was the green imp bounding and tumbling, as ready for a game of catch-as-catch-can as a young flea on the first of March; and if you have ever tried to catch one on that day you know the difficulty.

The Professor never had, so knew nothing about it; but now was his opportunity: a weapon was in his hand, and the net of it was large and the handle of it was long. And so for a few moments you have the degrading spectacle of an eminent scientist, and an O.M., pursuing on the material plane something which he did not really believe to exist.

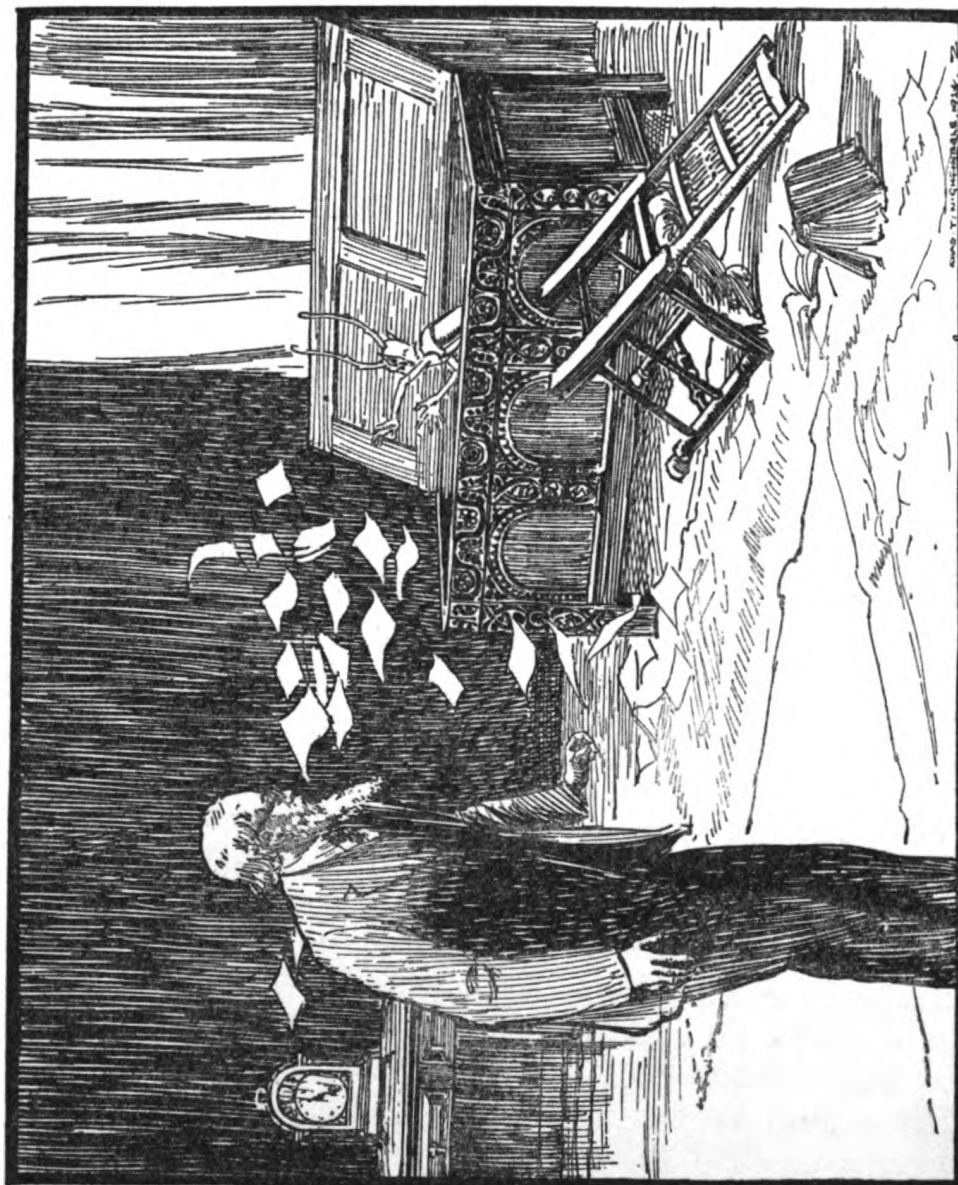
But the pursuit was soon over. The imp was too agile, the pace too killing; and the Professor in his stumbling course managed to knock over a great many things he did not intend to. He stopped exhausted, put down the net, and began to pick up his scattered papers.

The imp, imitative, seeing him thus occupied, made a playful addition to his task by scattering more.

At this the Professor thoroughly lost his temper. "Hallucination," he cried, "you are a perfect nuisance!"

As he spoke he opened a small chest and, to get them out of harm's way, began bundling the papers into it.

With a sportive dive, the imp plunged into the chest and scattered them out again. It was clear that he regarded this merely as a game; and the green butterfly net had given him his excuse.



The imp made a playful addition to his task.

But it gave him nothing else; for on this last bit of exasperating frivolity the Professor slammed down the lid and locked it. And there was the Tree-imp safely boxed inside.

It took him a minute or two to realize his triumph; it was, indeed, a little difficult to know on what lines to take it. Had the locking of the box, with the hallucination inside, disposed of the hallucination? Or was IT still there?

His doubt was solved almost at once, for from the inside of the chest the hallucination had once more become audible.

"What? What? Oh, I say! Let it out! Let it out! Quick, quick! Oh, why?" The voice was a little plaintive, a little anxious, but it had not yet begun seriously to complain. Then followed a pause.

The Professor stood considering; he had the key; going across to his writing-table, he laid it down. The chest continued to give forth sound: first a tapping on the lid, then a renewed chatter, which gradually grew faint.

The Professor drew a firm breath, and with a big effort of will took up his pen and tried to resume his writing: but the interest of the thing held him. The little secluded voice took on a more lamentable accent, but faint like a kettle trying to sing under a tea-cosy.

"I say! I say! Pick it out! Pick it out! What? What? Oh, why? . . . What? . . . Oh, why? . . . Oh! . . . Oh! . . . Oh!"

The sound was now so faint the Professor himself could no longer hear it; but for a little while it still went on. Once more from inside the chest came audibly that question so often repeated, "Oh, why?" Then all was still.

The Professor sat resolutely holding his pen, collecting

his thoughts, trying not to listen, but listening still. And though he assured himself that his mind really had recovered its balance at last, he gave a sharp start when there came a knock at the door and the Doctor entered.

The Doctor, with an encouraging smile, greeted him in the correct tone of professional optimism. "How are you, Professor? Nothing very serious, I hope?"

The Professor, in no hurry to give himself away, held himself in. He was now feeling a little aggrieved at the shock he had experienced.

"Doctor, before I say anything, I want you to examine me," he said.

The Doctor examined him, questioned him as to diet and sleep, felt his pulse, took his temperature, looked at his tongue, and then assured him that he found nothing the matter with him except old age.

"Am I mad?" inquired the Professor.

"Certainly not," said the Doctor.

"You won't send me to a lunatic asylum, if I tell you something you can't believe?"

"I will not, I promise you," replied the Doctor.

"I can't believe it myself," said the Professor.

"Then why talk about it?" said the Doctor.

"Because——" The Professor looked at the locked chest: then he said:

"I was sitting here writing, Doctor, and suddenly I glanced up, and there I saw a horrid little green thing looking at me—with eyes."

"Yes, it would have eyes, if it was looking at you," said the Doctor.

"Very curious eyes, Doctor—like a young bird's and it

had horns, and—well, there it was, you know. At first I didn't believe it. I thought it was green tea."

So the story started, and so, up to a certain point, it went on, as we know it: the Professor telling quite truthfully all that had happened, till he came to the point where he had upset his papers. "I was still picking them up," he said, "when you came in."

"Well?" said the Doctor, "and then——"

The Professor looked at the key, and he looked at the chest. No, he could not risk it: he could not risk having it proved that the thing he could not believe was really true.

"Then," he said, "it disappeared."

"And you haven't seen it since?"

"No."

"Nor heard it?"

"I have not——. That is, *no*."

"Well, then, that is all right," said the Doctor encouragingly.

But the Professor wasn't happy. "I hope so," he said doubtfully, and then, in more detail, began to explain himself.

"Doctor, I haven't explained to you the shock it was to me. It was that terrible moment when I thought there might be something in it after all. At that moment I saw all my life's work disappear. All my science, all my philosophy gone! Everything I had written—worth nothing! It was terrible. If it were true," he said after a pause, "I think I should have to kill myself."

The Doctor soothed him: told him to work less, take walks, go early to bed, drink less green tea, and then, after writing him a prescription, took his comfortable leave.

The Doctor's visit had undoubtedly done the Professor good; but no sooner was the Doctor's back turned than he went and stood by the chest and listened.

He listened for a long time and heard nothing. Then he stooped and tapped.

"Is anyone——? Is anything there?" he said.

There was no answer.

Much relieved, he went back to his work-table, and was just settling down again when his eye fell upon the key.

Twice he took hold of it, and twice laid it down again.

"No, I will not," he said.

And that being decided, his mind recovered its accustomed balance, and he fell to work again.

The clock had just struck twelve, when the door quietly opened and in came Elfrida.

Now it so happened that, that day, Elfrida was dressed all in green—even the cap on her head was green, and it had a green feather in it, sticking out. And so, as Elfrida came softly up to him, seeing something green moving it gave him a dreadful start, till a second look at her over the top of his glasses reassured him.

"Effie! Why Effie, my dear," he cried, "what a start you gave me!"

Elfrida nodded and laughed, and, wise in her way, said, "You thought I was a fairy."

"No, I didn't," cried the Professor. "I thought you were an hallucination."

"What's that?" inquired Elfrida.

"Something that's not real, my dear."

Then Elfrida kissed him. "I'm real!" she said, and the

Professor thanked God for it, feeling that an uncomfortable incident was well over.

All at once Elfrida began, very excited.

"Oh! you got my letter, Grandpapa, didn't you? And you got my present, too?"

"I got your letter, my dear. What present?"

"Why, the leaf that came off the tree that had fairies in it."

"Oh, yes, I got it, my dear; but I'm afraid I've lost it."

Elfrida didn't mind his losing the leaf; but she was very excited about the fairies.

"And you do believe what I told you," she cried, "don't you, Grandpapa? It was *true*; I *saw* them. You must believe that!"

"Well, I don't know," said the Professor wisely. "One isn't sure of everything one sees. At least, I'm not now."

But Elfrida was now only attending to herself, for she had much to say.

"Grandpapa, if you could only make people *know* there are fairies, wouldn't it be wonderful?"

"I suppose it would, my dear."

"And Grandpapa, if you were able to find one for them, wouldn't that be the wonderfulest thing of all?"

"Would it, my dear?"

The Professor was listening; he was almost beginning to think.

"Why, yes; for then they'd think you ever such a great person—much greater than you are now. To make the whole world think differently—just think of that!"

"But, my dear, if people—people who've read all my

books—were told that Professor Braintree believed in fairies, they would laugh.”

“You’d laugh too: but you could laugh longer than they would—because you’d have discovered it. Why, it would be like a miracle, Grandpapa. People would begin to *love* fairies again then.”

The Professor was really thinking now, thinking hard; but all he said was: “Well, perhaps. Green isn’t my favourite colour, though.”

This caused Elfrida to pay attention. “It’s funny your saying that,” she remarked. “The fairy *I* saw was green.”

“Was it, my dear?”

“And it had long horns, and its mouth and eyes were like a young bird’s; and when I tried to catch it, it made a noise at me—just like a bird—a nice bird.”

The Professor was now having shocks again, but all he said was: “Did it say, ‘Sick, sick, sick, sick’?”

“No,” replied Elfrida, and then, giving a vivid imitation of the very sound he had heard, “It just went ‘Chewee! chewee!’—like that.”

The Professor sat with his eyes staring out of his head: then he hadn’t been so mad after all! But not to be was almost worse.

Elfrida looked at him in great surprise. “But, Grandpapa,” she cried, “if you found one, you wouldn’t be afraid of it, would you? I wasn’t!”

That was a wise word of Elfrida’s; it came a little late, but it converted him.

“My dear,” he said, “would you like to see that—that thing again?”

“Why, yes!” cried Elfrida.

"Green, and with horns and eyes? Hear it again?"

Elfrida was joyfully prepared even for that.

"Well," he said, giving her the key, "there's no accounting for tastes!"

He had quite made up his mind now, and did not wait to let himself think again.

"You see that chest?" he went on. "Well, that is the key to it. Go and open it, and tell me what you find."

Elfrida took the key; she was rather solemn about it, for the Professor's manner impressed her. She crossed the room, opened the chest, and looked in. While she did so, there was much more excitement in the Professor's demeanour than in hers.

For a while she stood looking in, seeing nothing. Then she uttered a little cry, and stooped, and picked up something. She held it out in her hand. "Why, it's the leaf," she cried, "the leaf of that tree what I sent you! Oh, dear!"

This was quite unexpected to both of them.

"The leaf, you say?" replied the Professor. "Bring it here."

Elfrida brought it.

"And it's all withered and dead!" she cried, holding it up for his inspection.

The Professor looked at it with curious eyes, and was no longer afraid.

"So it is, to be sure!" he said. "Quite withered and dead. Well, put it down, my dear, and be off with you. I must get on with my work."

"Where shall I put it?" inquired Elfrida.

"Put it in the waste-paper basket, my dear. That's right. Now run away!"



Coming through the palings was a long string of little figures.

And so the dead leaf dropped to its repose on a bed of scrapped science-siftings. And though Elfrida did not quite know what she had done, she felt sad about it, and with head bent and hands straight down, as though convicted of some act of deep disgrace, she turned and walked softly out of the room.

As the door closed behind her, the Professor stooped down, and took a good long look into the waste-paper basket. Then, with a deep sigh of relief, he took up his pen and went on with his work.

But that night—no, it was the night after—something happened.

Quite suddenly Elfrida woke and sat up; in her sleep she had remembered something. She remembered how, that morning, she had seen the maid emptying her pan on the dust-heap in a corner of the garden behind the house, a pan full of torn papers, and litter, and sweepings—the sort of things which were emptied there every day.

Why Elfrida should so suddenly remember it, and be woken up by it, she did not know.

She was quite awake, quite dreadfully awake. The moon was shining through the blind. She got up, went across and lifted it, and looked out.

There was the garden, softly paved with the silver of moonlight, so silver that it looked like frost. And out beyond, over the wooden palings, lay Richmond Park.

And there, coming through the palings were little figures, a long string of them, crossing the garden and going in the direction of the dust-heap.

Presently she saw that they were searching it, turning it



They were searching the dust-heap.

over this way and that. And then it seemed as if they had found something.

What she saw next, she never told anybody but me; and she only told me because she knew that I would believe it.

"It was like a funeral!" she said. "They had all put on black, and as they walked they flapped with their hands, and swung their heads from side to side as if they were so sorry about something. And in the middle they had something that they carried, like the thing that carries dead people. And they brought it to the palings, and pushed it through, and then got through themselves; and after that they took it right away into Richmond Park, over the grass and through the trees, till I couldn't see them any more."

"Do you think," she asked, when she had quite finished her story, "do you think it could have been—*that leaf*?"

I did think—that it was possible.

"And that it had a fairy in it?"

"Well, yes, that would account for it, wouldn't it? That would explain."

"Then the fairy must have been dead," she said sadly.

Yes, I had to own that it seemed like it.

"Did I kill the fairy, by sending it in the letter, do you think?"

"No, I don't think you did, my dear," I replied. "Fairies don't die like that; they die of shock."

"What kind of shock?" she asked. "When I shock Auntie, she doesn't die of it."

"*When people don't believe in them,*" I said.



LUCY

By WALTER DE LA MARE

ONCE upon a time there were three sisters, the Misses MacKnackery—or, better still, the Miss MacKnackeries. They lived in a large, white, square mansion called Stoneyhouse; and their names were Euphemia, Tabitha, and Jean Elspeth. They were known over Scotland for miles and miles, from the Tay to the Grampians—from the Tay to the Grumpy Ones, as a cousin who did not like Euphemia and Tabitha used to say.

Stoneyhouse had been built by the Miss MacKnackeries's grandfather, Mr. Angus MacKnackery, who, from being a poor boy with scarcely a bawbee in his breeches pocket, had risen up to be a wealthy manufacturer of the best Scotch burlap, which is a kind of sacking. He made twine, too, for tying up parcels. He would have made almost anything to make money. But at last, when he was sixty-six, he felt he would like to be a gentleman living in the country with a large garden to walk about in, flowers in beds, cucumbers in frames, and one or two cows for milk, cream, and butter.

So he sold his huge, smoky works and warehouse, and all the twine and burlap, hemp, jute, and whalebone still in it, for £80,000. With this £80,000 he built Stoneyhouse, purchased some fine furniture and some carriages and horses, and invested what was over.

Jean Elspeth, when she was learning sums, and when

she had come to Interest—having sometimes heard her father and mother speak of her grandfather and of his fortune, and how he had invested it—just to please her governess, Miss Gimp, thought she would make a sum of it. So she wrote down in her rather straggly figures in an exercise book:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{£80,000 @ £4 per centum per annum} \\ & = \text{£80,000} \times 4 \div 100 = \text{£52,000.} \end{aligned}$$

It was the first really enjoyable sum she had ever done. And yet Miss Gimp was a little put about when Jean Elspeth showed it to her father. Still, Mr. MacKnackery, senior, had been a really rich man, and regretted that the gentleman who bought his factory never could afterwards make such fine burlap as himself, nor even such admirable twine.

He lived to be eighty, and then he died, leaving his money to his son, Robert Duncan Donald David, Jean Elspeth's father. And when *he* died, his dear wife Euphemia Tabitha being dead too, he left all that was over of the £80,000 (for, alas and alas! he had lost a good part of it) to his three daughters: Euphemia, Tabitha, and Jean Elspeth.

When Jean Elspeth was old enough to breakfast with the family in the big dining-room with the four immense windows, she used to sit opposite the portraits of her grandfather, her father, and her mother. They hung in heavy handsome gilt frames on the wall opposite the windows. And while in her high chair she gobbled up her porridge—and gobbled it up quickly, not so much because she liked

it as because she hated being put in the corner for not eating it—she would sit and look at them.

Her grandfather's was by far the largest of the three portraits, and it hung in the very middle of the lofty wall, under the moulded ceiling. He was a stout and imposing man, with bushy whiskers and cold bright blue eyes. The thumb and first finger of his right hand held a fine thick Albert watch-chain, which the painter had painted so skilfully that you could see it was eighteen-carat gold at a single glance. So he hung, for ever boldly gazing.

What was more, her grandfather always looked exactly as if he was on the point of taking out his watch to see the time; and Jean Elspeth had the odd notion that, if he ever did succeed in so doing, its hands would undoubtedly point to a quarter to twelve. But she could no more have told you why, than she could tell you why she used to count each spoonful of her porridge, or why she felt happier when the last spoonful was an odd number.

The portrait of her father was that of a man much less stout and imposing than her grandfather. He was dark, and smiling, and he had no whiskers. But Jean Elspeth had loved him dearly, and each morning when she had finished her breakfast (and if nobody was looking) she would give a tiny little secret wave of the spoon towards him, as if he might be pleased at seeing her empty plate.

On the other side of her grandfather's portrait hung a picture of her mother. And the odd thing about this picture was that, if you looked long enough, you could not help seeing—as if it were almost the ghost of Jean Elspeth—her very own small face, peeping out of the paint at you, just like a tiny little green marmoset out of a cage all



to itself in the Zoo. Jean Elspeth had discovered this when she was only seven; but Euphemia and Tabitha had never noticed it at all.

They knew they were far less like their mother (who had been a Miss Reeks MacGillicuddy of Kelso) than their grandfather, and they were exceedingly proud of *that*. As for Jean Elspeth, they didn't think she was like any of the family at all. Indeed, Euphemia had more than once remarked that Jean Elspeth had "no deegnity," and Tabitha that "she micht just as weel ha' been a changeling." Even

now, when they were elderly ladies, they always treated her as if she were still not very far from being a child, though, after all, Jean Elspeth was only five years younger than Tabitha.

But then, how different she was in looks! For while Tabitha had a long pale face a little like a horse, with mouse-colored hair and green-grey eyes, Jean Elspeth was dark and small, with red in her cheek and a tip to her nose. And while Tabitha's face changed very little, Jean Elspeth's was like a dark little glancing pool on an April morning. Sometimes it looked almost centuries older than either of her sisters', and then, again, sometimes it looked simply no age at all.

It depended on what she was doing—whether she was sitting at seven o'clock dinner on Great Occasions, when the Bults and the McGaskins, and Dr. Menzies were guests, or merely basking idly in the sunshine at her bedroom window. Jean Elspeth would sometimes, too, go wandering off by herself over the hills a mile or two away from the house. And *then* she looked not a minute older than looks an elf-child, or a whinchat, perched with his white eyebrow on a fuzz-bush near a lichenous half-hidden rock among the heather.

However sad, too, she looked, she never looked grim. And even though (at dinner parties) she parted her hair straight down the middle, and smoothed the sides over as sleek as satin, she simply could not look what is called "superior." Besides, she had lips that were the colour of cherries, and curious quick hands that she was sometimes compelled to clasp together lest they should talk even more rapidly than her tongue.

Now in Stoneyhouse nobody—except perhaps the tweeny-maid and the scullery-maid, Sally and Nancy McGullie, who were cousins—ever talked *much*. It was difficult even to tell exactly how wise and sagacious and full of useful knowledge Euphemia and Tabitha were, simply because they so seldom opened their mouths, except at meals. And never to sing.

This, maybe, was because it is impossible to keep order if everybody's tongue keeps wagging. It wastes time, too, for only very few people can work hard and talk hard both at the same time. And in Stoneyhouse everything was in apple-pie order (except the beds), and nobody ever wasted any time.

And yet, although time was never wasted, nobody seemed to be very much the better off for any that was actually "saved." Nobody had ever managed to pack some of it up in neat brown-paper parcels, or to put it in a bank as Mr. MacKnackery, senior, had put his money, or to pour it into jars like home-made jam. It just went. And in Stoneyhouse (until, at least, Euphemia one morning received a certain letter) it went very very slowly. The big hands of its clocks seemed to be envious of the little ones. They crept like shadows. And between their "tick" and their "tock" at times yawned a huge hole, as dark as a cellar. So, at least, Jean Elspeth fancied.

One glance at Stoneyhouse, even from the outside, would tell you how orderly it was. The four high white walls, with their large square slate roof fixed firmly on top of them, stood stiff as bombardiers on extremely solid foundations, and they on even solider rock. No tree dared cast a shadow upon them, no creeper crept. The glossy windows,



Jean Elspeth would sometimes go wandering off by herself over the hills.



with their straight lines of curtains behind them, just stared down on you as if they said, "Find the faintest speck or smear or flaw in us if you can!" And you hadn't the courage even to try.

It was just so inside. Everything was in its place. Not only the great solid pieces of substantial furniture which Mr. MacKnackery had purchased with his burlap money—wardrobes, coffers, presses, four-posters, chests-of-drawers, sideboards, tables, sofas, chairs—but even all the little things, bead-mats, footstools, candle-snuffers, boot-

trees, ornaments, knick-knacks, Euphemia's silks and Tabitha's water-colours. There was a place for everything, and everything was in its place. Yes, and kept there.

Except in Jean Elspeth's room. She could never learn to be tidy, not even in her sums. She was constantly taking things out, and either forgetting to put them away again, or putting them away again in their wrong places. And do you suppose she blamed herself for this? Not at all. When she lost anything and had been looking for it for hours and hours—a book, or a brooch, or a ribbon, or a shoe—she would say to herself, laughing all over, “Well now, there! That *Lucy* must have hidden it!” And presently *there* it would be, right in the middle of her dressing-table or under a chair, as if it had been put back there just for fun.

And who was this “*Lucy*”? There couldn't be a more difficult question; and Jean Elspeth had never attempted to answer it. It was one of those questions she never even asked herself, at least, not out loud. This, perhaps, was because she hated the thought of hurting anybody's feelings. As if *Lucy*—but, never mind!

It was *Lucy*, at any rate, who so unfortunately came into that dreadful talk over the porridge on the morning when the fatal letter came to Euphemia. It arrived just like any other letter. The butler, with his mouth as closely shut as usual, laid it beside Euphemia's plate. Judging from its large white envelope, nobody could possibly have thought it was as deadly as a poison and sharper than a serpent's tooth. Euphemia opened it, too, just as usual—with her long, lean forefinger, and her eyebrows lifted a little under

her grey front of hair. And then she read it, and turned to ice.

It was from her lawyer, or rather from her Four Lawyers, for they all shared the same office, and at the foot of the letter one of them had signed all their four names. It was a pitch-black letter — a thunderbolt. It said at the beginning that the Miss MacKnackeries must expect in future to be less well off than they had been in the past, and it said at the end that they were ruined.

You see, Euphemia's grandfather had lent what remained of his £80,000 (after building Stoneyhouse and buying furniture, cucumber-seed, horses, cows, and so on) to the British Government, for the use of the British nation. The British Government of that day put the money into what were called the Consolidated Funds. And to show how much obliged they were to Mr. MacKnackery for the loan of it, they used every year to pay him interest on it—so many shillings for every hundred pounds. Not so much as £4 per centum, as Jean Elspeth had put down in her sum, but as much as they could afford—and that was at least 1,000,000 bawbees. There couldn't have been a safer money-box; nor could Mr. MacKnackery's income have "come in" more regularly if it had come in by clockwork. So far the British Government resembled Stoneyhouse itself.

But the Miss MacKnackeries's father was not only a less imposing man than their grandfather, he had been much less careful of his money. He delighted in *buying* things and giving presents, and the more he spent the more he wanted to spend. So he had gradually asked for his

money back from the British Government, using some of it and lending the rest to persons making railways and gasworks in foreign parts, and digging up gold and diamonds, and making scent out of tar, and paint which they said would never wear off or change colour, and everything like that.

These persons paid him for helping them like this a good deal more than the Consolidated Funds could pay. But then gasworks are not always so *safe* as the British nation. It is what is called a speculation to lend gentlemen money to help them to dig up diamonds or to make waterworks in Armenia, which means that you cannot be perfectly sure of getting it back again. Often and often, indeed, the Miss MacKnacker's father had not got *his* money back.

And now—these long years after his death—the worst had befallen. The Four Lawyers had been suddenly compelled to tell the Miss MacKnacker's that nearly every bit left of their grandfather's savings was gone; that their bright gold had vanished like the glinting mists of a June morning. They had for some time been accustomed to growing less and less rich; but that's a very different thing from becoming desperately poor. It is the difference between a mouse with a fat slice of cheese and a mouse without a crumb.

Euphemia, before opening the letter, had put on her pince-nez. As she read, the very life seemed to ebb out of her countenance, leaving it cold and grey. She finished it to the last word, then with a trembling hand took the glasses off her nose and passed the letter to Tabitha. Tabitha could still read without spectacles. Her light

eyes passed rapidly to and fro across the letter, then she, too, put it down, her face not pale, but red and a little swollen. "It is the end, Euphemia," she said.

Jean Elspeth was sitting that morning with her back to the portraits, and at the moment was gently munching a slice of dry toast and Scotch marmalade (made by the Miss MacKnackerie's cook, Mrs. O'Phrump). She had been watching a pied wagtail flitting after flies across the smooth shorn lawn on the white stone terrace. Then her gaze had wandered off to the blue outline of the lovely distant hills, the Grumpy Ones, and her mind had slid into a kind of day-dream.

Into the very middle of this day-dream had broken the sound of Tabitha's words, "It is the end, Euphemia"; and it was as if a trumpet had uttered them.

She looked round in dismay, and saw her sisters, Euphemia and Tabitha, sitting there in their chairs at the table, as stiff and cold as statues of stone. Not only this, which was not so very unusual, but they both of them looked extremely unwell. *Then* she noticed the letter. And she knew at once that this must be the serpent that had suddenly bitten her sisters' minds. The blood rushed up into her cheeks, and she said—feeling more intensely sorry for them both than she could possibly express— "Is there anything wrong, Euphemia?"

And Euphemia, in a voice Jean Elspeth would certainly not have recognized if she had heard it from outside the door, replied, "You may well ask it." And then in a rush Jean Elspeth remembered her strange dream of the night before, and at once went blundering on: "Well, you know, Euphemia, I had a dream last night, all dark and awful,



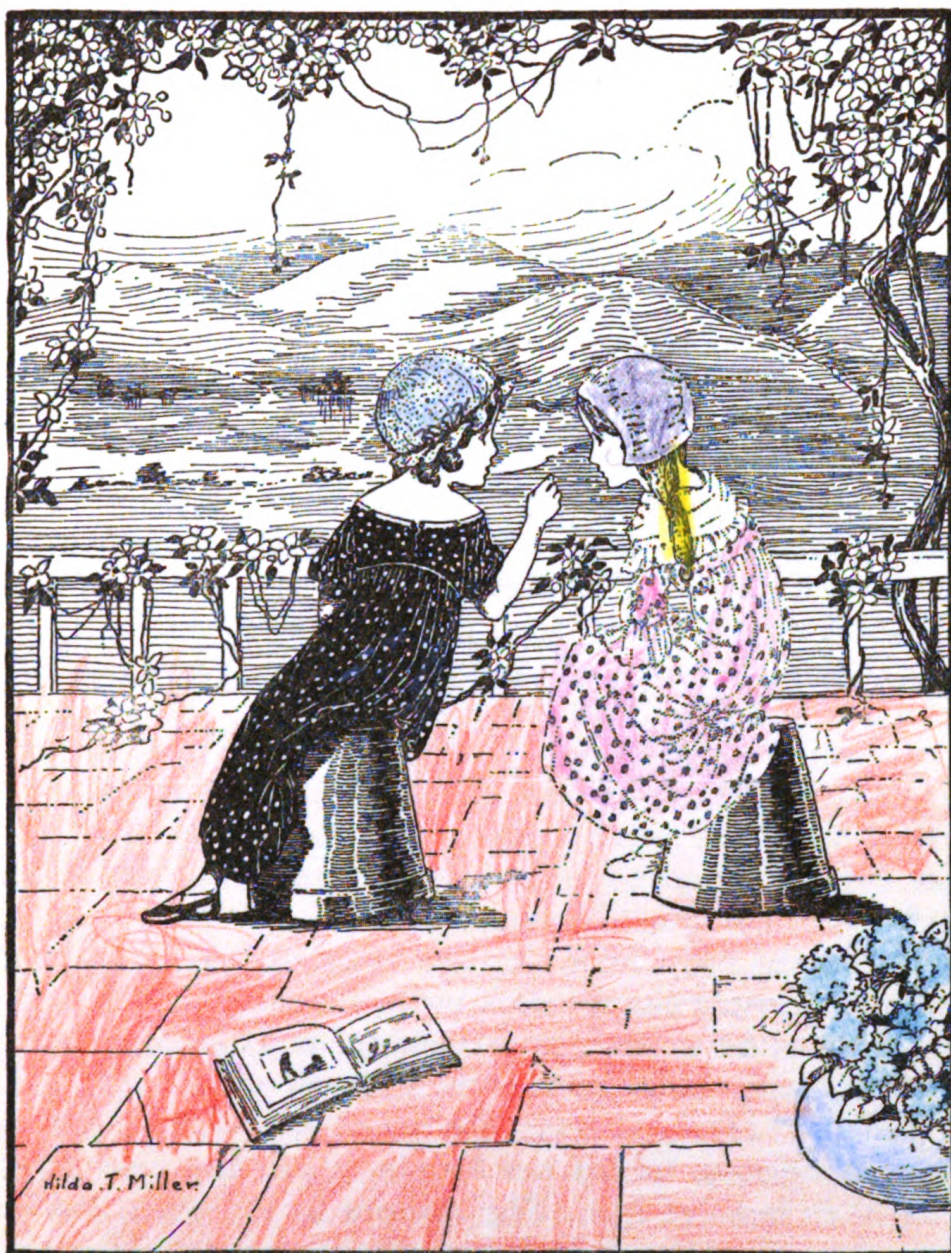
She knew that Lucy was somewhere close beside her.

and, in it, *there was Lucy* looking out of a crooked window over some water. And she said to me——”

But Tabitha interrupted her: “I think, Elspeth, neither myself nor Euphemia at this moment wish to hear what Lucy, as you call her, said in your dream. We have received exceedingly bad news this morning, that intimately concerns not only Tabitha and me, but even yourself also. And this is no time for frivolity.” And it sounded even more tragic in her Scots tongue.

Jean Elspeth had not meant to be frivolous. She had hoped merely, and if but for a moment, to turn her sisters’ minds away from this dreadful news that had come with the postman, and to explain what her dream had seemed to promise. But no. It was just her way. Whenever she said anything to her sisters, anything that came from the very bottom of her heart, she always made a muddle of it. It sounded as small and meaningless as the echo of a grasshopper’s chirrup against a bare stone wall. They would look at her out of their green-grey eyes, down their long pale noses, with an expression either grim or superior, or both. Of course, too, at such a moment, any mention of Lucy was a dreadfully silly mistake. Even at the best of times they despised Jean Elspeth for such “childishness,” and now it must seem like a hideous joke.

For there never was and there never could be any *real* Lucy. It was only a name. And yet Jean Elspeth still longed to find any word of hope or comfort that would bring back a little colour into poor Euphemia’s cheeks, and make her look a little less like an image in marble. But no word came. She had even failed to hear what her sisters were saying. At last she could bear herself no longer.



She would sometimes sit on one flower-pot, and she would put another flower-pot for Lucy.

"I am sure, Euphemia, that you would like to talk the letter over with Tabitha in quiet, and that you will tell me if I can be of any help. I think I will go out into the garden."

Euphemia bowed her head. And though, by trying to move it with as little noise as possible, Jean Elspeth made her heavy chair give a loud screech on the polished floor, she managed to escape at last.

It was a cold, clear spring morning, and the trees in the distance were just tipped with their new green buds. The gardeners were already mapping out their rows of plants in the herbaceous borders, in preparation for the summer. There never was a garden "kept" so well. The angles of the flower-beds on the lawn—diamonds and lozenges, octagons, squares, and oblongs—were as sharp as if they had been cut out of cardboard with a pair of scissors. Not a blade of grass was out of place.

If even one little round pebble pushed up a shoulder in the gravel path, up came an immense heavy roller and ground him back into his place. As for a weed, let but one poke her blunt green nose above the black mould, she would soon see what happened.

The bright light from the sky streamed down upon the house, and every single window in the high white wall of it seemed to be scornfully watching Jean Elspeth as she made her way down to a little straight green seat under the terrace. Here, at least, she was out of their sight.

She sat down, folded her hands in her lap, and looked straight in front of her. She always so sat when she was in trouble. In vain she tried to compose and fix her mind and to *think*. It was impossible. For she had not been



She was sitting in a corner by the large cupboard.

there more than a moment or two before she knew that Lucy was haunting somewhere close beside her. So close and so much on purpose, as it were, that it was almost as if she wanted to whisper something in her ear.

Now it has been said that Lucy was only a name. Yet, after all, she was a little more than that. Years and years ago, when Jean Elspeth was only seven, she "sort of" made Lucy up. It was simply because there was no one else to play with, for Tabitha was five years older, and at least fifty-five times more sensible and intelligent and grown-up. So Jean Elspeth had just pretended.

In those days she would sometimes sit on one flower-pot on the long hot or windy terrace, and she would put another flower-pot for Lucy. And they would talk, or rather she would talk, and Lucy would look. Or sometimes they sat together in a corner of the great bare nursery. And sometimes Jean Elspeth would pretend she was holding Lucy's hand when she fell asleep.

And the really odd thing was that the less in those days she tried to "pretend," the more Lucy came. And though Jean Elspeth had never seen her with what is called her naked eye, she must have seen her with some other kind of eye, for she knew that her hair and skin were fairer than the fairest of flax, and that she was dressed in very light and old-fashioned clothes, though she could not say *how* old-fashioned.

Another queer thing was that Lucy always seemed to come and appear entirely out of nothing, and entirely of herself, when anything very odd or unexpected or sad or very beautiful happened, and sometimes just before they happened. That had been why she had told Euphemia her

dream of the night before. For though everything else in the dream had been dark and dismal, and the water had roared furiously over its rocks, breaking into foam like snow, and Jean Elspeth had been shaken with terror, Lucy herself appearing at the window had been more beautiful than moonlight and comforting as a star.

It was a pity, of course, that Jean Elspeth had ever so much as mentioned Lucy at all. But that had been years and years ago and then she could not really help doing so. For Tabitha had crept up behind her one morning—it was on her eighth birthday—while she was sitting in a corner by the large cupboard, with her back to the nursery door, and had overheard her talking to someone.

“Aha! little Miss Toad-in-the-hole; and who are *you* talking to?” Tabitha had asked.

Jean Elspeth had turned cold all over. “Nobody,” she said.

“Oh, Nobody is it? Then you just tell me Nobody’s name,” said Tabitha.

And Jean Elspeth had refused. Unfortunately, she had been wearing that morning a high-waisted frock, with sleeves that came down only to the elbow, and though Tabitha, with nips and pinches of her bare skinny arm could not make Jean Elspeth cry, she had at least made her tell.

“Oh, so its name’s Lucy, is it?” said Tabitha. “You horrid little frump. Then you tell her from me that if I catch her anywhere about, I’ll scratch her eyes out.”

After another pinch or two, and a good “ring-of-the-bells” at Jean Elspeth’s plait, Tabitha had gone downstairs to her father.

"Papa," she said, "I am sorry to interrupt you, but I think poor Elspeth must be ill or in a fever. She is 'rambling.' Had we better give her some Gregory's powder, or some castor-oil, do you think?"

Mr. MacKnackery had been worried that morning by a letter about a gold mine, something like that which poor Euphemia so many years afterwards was to receive from the Four Lawyers, though it was less worrying than that. But when *he* was worried he at once tried to forget his worry. Indeed, even at sight of what looked like an ugly letter, he would begin softly whistling and smiling. So it was almost with a sigh of relief that he pushed the uncomfortable letter into a drawer and climbed the stairs to the nursery.

And when Jean Elspeth, after crying a little as she sat on his knee, had told him about Lucy, he merely smiled out of his dark eyes, and, poking his finger and thumb into a waistcoat pocket, had pulled out, just as if it had been waiting there especially for this occasion, a tiny little gold locket with a picture of a moss-rose inside, which he asked Jean Elspeth to give to Lucy the very next time she came again. "My dear," he had said, "I have my Lucy, too, though I never, never talk about her. I keep her 'for best.'"

As for Tabitha, he thanked her most gratefully that morning at luncheon for having been so thoughtful about her sister. "But I fear, my child," he said, "you must be fretting yourself without need. And for fretting there is nothing so good as Gregory's powder. So I have asked Alison to mix a good dose for you at bedtime, and if you are very generous, perhaps Jenny would like to lick the spoon."

The very moment he turned his face away, with as dreadful a grimace as she could manage, Tabitha had put out her long pale tongue at Jean Elspeth—which was about as much use as it would have been to put out her tongue for their old doctor—Dr. Menzies—after he had gone out of the room.

Whenever Jean Elspeth thought of those far-away years she always began to day-dream. And whenever she began to day-dream Lucy was sure to seem more real to her than at any other time. The gravel path, the green lawn, the distant hills vanished away before her eyes. She was lost as if in a region of light and happiness. There she was happy awhile. But cold spattering rain-drops on her cheeks soon called her back to herself. A dark cloud had come over the world, and for the first time a dark dread came into her mind of what Euphemia's letter might mean.

She turned sharply on the little green seat almost as if she had been caught trespassing. And at that instant she could have vowed that she actually saw—this time with her real naked eye—a child standing and looking at her a few paces beyond. It was mere make-believe, of course; but what most surprised Jean Elspeth was that there should be such a peculiar smile on the child's face—as if she was saying: "Never mind, my dear; whatever happens, whatever they say, I am going to be with you more than *ever* before. You just see!"

And then, not for the first time in her life Jean Elspeth felt almost ashamed of having a phantom friend. When they were all in such trouble, was it quite fair to Euphemia and Tabitha? Was it even quite right? She actually went so far as to turn away in the opposite direction, and would

have hastened straight back to the house if, at that moment, she had not heard a small, curious fluttering behind her. She turned her head on her shoulder, but it was to find only that a robin had stolen in on her to share her company, and was now eyeing her with his bead-black eye from his perch on the green seat which she had but just vacated.

For lunch that day the butler brought in a small soup-tureen of porridge. When he had attended to each of the ladies, and had withdrawn, Euphemia explained to Jean Elspeth precisely what the lawyer's letter meant. It was a long letter, not only about the gentlemen who had failed to find water enough for their waterworks in Armenia, but also about some other gentlemen in Madagascar whose crops of manioc and caoutchouc had almost as suddenly failed. Jean Elspeth did not quite grasp the details: she did not quite understand why the lawyers had ever taken such a fancy to caoutchouc; but she did perfectly understand Euphemia's last sentence: "So you see, Elspeth, we are ruined!"

And would you believe it? Once more Jean Elspeth said the wrong thing. Or rather it was her voice that was wrong. Far away in it was the sound as of a bugle bugling at break of day. "And does that mean, Euphemia, that we shall have to *leave* Stoneyhouse?"

"It means," said Tabitha tartly, "that Stoneyhouse may have to leave *us*."

"In either case we are powerless," added Euphemia. And the tone in which Euphemia uttered these words—sitting there straight and erect, with her long white face, in her sleek grey silk morning gown with its pattern of tiny

mauve flowers—brought tears, not to Jean Elspeth's eyes, but to somewhere deep down inside her. It was as if somebody was drawing water out of the very well of her heart.

"It is the disgrace," said Tabitha. "To have to turn our backs, to run away. We shall be the talk, the laughing-stock of the county."

"Laugh at us because we are ruined!" cried Jean Elspeth.

But this time Tabitha ignored her. "This is the house," she said, "our noble grandfather built for us. And here I will die, unless I am positively driven out of it by these systematic blood-suckers."

"Tabitha!" cried Euphemia. "Surely we should not demean ourselves so far even as to call them by their right name."

"Systematic blood-suckers," cried Tabitha fiercely. "I will sell the very rings off my fingers rather than be an exile from the house where I was born. And *he—he* at least shall never witness the ruin into which our father's folly has betrayed us."

She rose from her seat, and mounting on one of the maroon damask chairs that, unless guests were present, were accustomed to stand in a demure row along the wall, she succeeded, after one or two vain attempts, in turning the immense gilt portrait of her grandfather with its face to the wall.

Then tears really came into Jean Elspeth's eyes. But they were tears of anger rather than of pity. "I think," she said, "that is being intensely unkind to father."

"By this time," said Tabitha sternly, "I should have supposed that you would have given up the notion that you

are capable of thinking. What right have you to defend your father, pray, simply because you take after him?"

Jean Elspeth made no answer. Her father continued to smile down at her from his nail—though it was not a very good portrait, because the painter had been unable to get the hair and the waistcoat quite right. And if—even at this unhappy moment—Jean Elspeth had had her porridge spoon in her hand, she would certainly have given it a little secret wave in his direction.

But he was not to smile down for very long. The Miss MacKnacker's grandfather continued to hang with his face to the wall. But the two other portraits, together with the wardrobes, coffers, presses, sideboards, bead-mats, bureaux, and even the Indian work-boxes, were all taken off in a few weeks, to be sold for what they would fetch. And Euphemia now, instead of five, wore but one ring, and that of turquoises.

In a month all the servants, from the butler to Sally McGullie, and all the gardeners were gone. Mrs. O'Phrump alone remained—first because she was too stout to be likely to be comfortable in any new place, and next, because she was not greedy about wages. That was all. Just Mrs. O'Phrump and the gardener's boy, Tom Piper, whose mother lived in the village, and who slept at home. But he was a lazy boy, was Tom Piper, and when he was not fast asleep in the tool-shed, he was dreaming in the deserted orchard.

It was extraordinary to be alive and to be living in so empty a house. The echoes! Why, if you but walked alone down a corridor, you heard your own footsteps tapping after you all the way down. If by yourself, in

"your ain, ain company," you but laughed out in a room, it was like being the silver clapper of a huge hollow bell. All Stoneyhouse seemed empty now; and yet perhaps the emptiest place of all was the coach-house.

And then the stables. It was simply astonishing how quickly stray oats, that had fallen by chance into the cran-nies, sprang up green among the cobblestones in front of their walls. And if for a little while you actually stood in the stables beside one of the empty mangers, the note of a bird was like the sound of a hundred. And you could almost see ghostly horses with their dark eyes looking round at you out of their long narrow heads, as if to say: "So this is what you have done with us!"

Not that Jean Elspeth had very much time to linger over such experiences. Somehow, she seemed to have grown even smaller in the empty house. But she was ten times more active. And, though she tried not to be selfish by showing it, she was more than ten times happier. Between Jean Elspeth herself and the eagle-surmounted gateposts, indeed, she now secretly confessed that she had always hated Stoneyhouse. How very odd, then, that the moment it ceased to be a place in which any fine personage would care to stay a moment, she began to be friends with it. She began to pity it.

No doubt Tabitha was right. Their grandfather would assuredly have "turned in his grave," in her own words, at the sound of those enormous vans, those hideous pan-technicons, as their wheels ground down the gravel in the lingering twilight evenings. And yet, after all, that grandfather had been born—a fact that very much shocked Tabitha, whenever her father had smilingly related it—

that grandfather had been born in a two-roomed cottage so minute that, if only you could have got it through the windows, it would have fitted quite comfortably into the great dining-room at Stoneyhouse.

There was not a single bawbee then in his breeches pocket, and having been such a good man, as both Euphemia and Tabitha agreed, he did not need a bawbee now. *Would* he then—once the pantehnicons were out of the way—would he, thought Jean Elspeth, have been so very miserable to see all this light in the house and to hear all these charming echoes?

There were other advantages, too. It was easy to sweep the dining-room now; and much easier to dust it. There was peace in its vacancy, and it was not stagnant. And one day, more out of kindness than curiosity, after busily whisking over its gilt frame with her feather cornice-broom, Jean Elspeth climbed on to a chair, and, tilting it, looked in at the portrait. A spider had spun its web in one corner, but otherwise (it was almost disappointing) the picture was unchanged. Nor had Mr. MacKnackery yet taken his watch out of his pocket even though (for his three granddaughters at any rate) the time was now, so to speak, long past twelve.

Jean Elspeth had had ridiculous thoughts like these as long as she could remember. But now they came swarming into her mind like midsummer bees into a hive. Try as she might, she could not keep them all to herself, and though on this account alone Tabitha seemed to dislike her more than ever, Euphemia seemed sometimes to wish for her company. But then, Euphemia was by no means well. She had begun to stoop a little, and sometimes did not hear

what was said to her. To watch her visibly grow older like this gave Jean Elspeth dreadful anxiety. Still, in most things she confessed to herself almost every dawn, looking down from her upper window, she was far far happier than when Stoneyhouse stood in all its glory.

Indeed, there was no time to be anything else; and even if there had been a complete cupboard *full* of neat packages of time *saved*, she would have used them all up in a week. Euphemia, being so poorly, did very little. She helped to make the beds and to do the mending. Only the mending, for, fortunately, the making of any new clothes would be unnecessary for years and years to come; they had so many old ones. Tabitha did what she could manage of the lighter work, but although she had a quick tongue, she had slow, clumsy hands. And it is quite certain, though nobody, of course, would have been so unkind as to say so, that she would never have got even as low wages as Sally McGullie, if she had been in need of a place.

Mrs. O'Phrump did the cooking; but sat on one chair in the kitchen for so many hours together that she became almost like a piece of furniture—the heaviest piece in the house. For the cooking of water-porridge and potatoes does not require very much time, and that was pretty much all that the Miss MacKnackerries had to eat, except for the eggs from Jean Elspeth's three Cochin-Chinas. And Mrs. O'Phrump needed most of these, as there was so much of her to sustain. As for the apples and pears in the orchard, since Mrs. O'Phrump was too stout to stoop to make dumplings, Jean Elspeth, having two wonderful rows of small sharp teeth, shared these with Tom Piper—though *he* had all the stomach-aches.

All the rest of the work fell to Jean Elspeth. She slaved from morning till night. And to slave the more merrily, she had taught herself to whistle. She never asked herself why she was so happy. And no doubt it was chiefly by contrast of having been so cramped-in, and kept-under, and miserable in days gone by.

Still, certain things did now happen in Stoneyhouse that had not happened before, and some of these may have helped. For one thing, Jean Elspeth had always dreaded "company." Dressing-up made her feel awkward. The simplest stranger made her shy. She would have much preferred to say Boh to a goose. None came now, except Dr. Menzies, who of his kindness sometimes called to feel Euphemia's pulse and look at her tongue.

Jean Elspeth, too, had never liked servants, not because they were servants, but because Euphemia and Tabitha seemed to think that they oughtn't to be talked to much. Just given their orders. Now Jean Elspeth could easily have given everything else in the world: but not orders. And if there ever *had* been an interesting creature in Stoneyhouse, even though she was so stupid in some things, it was Sally McGullie.

Then, again, Jean Elspeth, being by nature desperately untidy, never showed it now. For it's all but impossible to be untidy in a room that contains only a table and three chairs!

Then, yet again, Jean Elspeth, before the gentlemen in Armenia and Madagascar had been disappointed in their waterworks and caoutchouc, had had very little to do. She was scarcely even allowed to read. For Tabitha was convinced that most reading was a waste of time, if not worse.



There hung within it a marvellous bush of Traveller's Joy.

And somehow, improving books had never the least bit improved Jean Elspeth. But now she had so many things to do that it was a perfect joy to fit them all in (like the pieces of a puzzle). And the perfectest joy of all was to scramble into her truckle bed, which had formerly been Sally McGullie's bed, and, with a tallow candle stuck by its own grease to the left hand knob, to read and read and read.

The hours she spent like this, with no living company but mice and moths and bats and scritch-owls! When her upper parts in the winter were cold, she put her skirt over the quilt. One thin blanket, indeed, is not much comfort on cold nights, when one is lying up North there, almost in positive view of the Grumpy Ones. And for her feet, she used to boil some water in a kettle and fill a wine bottle.

This, of course, broke a good many bottles; and it was an odd thing that until there was only one left, Tabitha (whose feet were like slabs of ice) refused to think of such a vulgarity. And *then* she changed her mind. And medicine-bottles are too small.

Apart from all this, queer things now happened in Stoneyhouse. Little things, but entrancing. The pantechicon men, for example, had broken a window on a lower staircase as they were heaving down old Mr. MacKnackery's best wardrobe. A pair of robins in the spring-time noticed this hole, and decided to build their nest in a nook of the cornice. Jean Elspeth (with her tiny whistling) was accepted as the bosom friend of the whole family.

There was too a boot cupboard, one too far from the kitchen for Mrs. O'Phrump to use. Its window had been left open. And when, by chance, Jean Elspeth looked in

one sunny afternoon, there hung within it a marvellous bush of Traveller's Joy, rather pale in leaf, but actually flowering there; and even a butterfly sipping of its nectar. After that, not a day passed more but she would peep in at this delicate green visitor, and kiss her hand. It was, too, an immense relief to Jean Elspeth to have said good-bye for ever to lots of things in the house that seemed to her to have been her enemies ever since she was a child.

She wandered up into rooms she had never seen before, and looked out of windows whose views had never before lain under her eyes. Nor did she cease to day-dream, but indulged in just tiny ones, that may come and go, like swifts, between two ticks of a clock. And although, of course, Tabitha strongly disapproved of much that delighted Jean Elspeth now, there was not nearly so much time in which to tell her so.

Besides, Jean Elspeth was more useful in that great barracks of a place than ten superior parlourmaids would have been. She was more like a little steam-engine than a maiden lady. And, like a steam-engine, she refused to be angry; she refused to sulk; and she usually refused to answer back. But when nowadays she *did* answer back, her tongue had a sting to it at least as sharp (though never so venomous) as that of the busy bee.

And last, but not least, there was the *outside* of the house. As soon as ever Mr. McPhizz and his under-gardeners had departed with their shears and knives and edging-irons and mowing-machines, wildness had begun to creep into the garden. Wind and bird carried in seeds from the wilderness, and after but two summers, the trim barbered lawns sprang up into a marvellous meadow of

daisies and buttercups, dandelions, meadowsweet and fools' parsley, and then seeding dock and thistle and feathery grasses. Toadflax, bindweed, convolvulus crept across the terrace; Hosts of the Tiny blossomed between the stones. Moss, too, in mats and cushions of a green livelier than the emerald, or even than a one-night-old beech-leaf. Rain stains now softly coloured the white walls, as if a stranger had come in the night and begun to paint pictures there. And the roses, in their now hidden beds, rushed back as fast as ever they could to bloom like their wild-briar sisters again.

And not only green things growing. Jean Elspeth would tiptoe out to see complete little families of rabbits nibbling their breakfast or supper of dandelion leaves on the very flagstones under the windows. Squirrels nattered; moles burrowed; hedgehogs came beetle-hunting; mice of every tiny size scampered and twinkled and danced and made merry.

As for the birds—birds numberless! And of so many kinds and colours and notes that she had to sit up half the night looking out their names in the huge bird-book her father had given her on her eleventh Christmas. This was the one treasure she had saved from the pantechinon men. She had wrapped it up in two copies of *The Scotsman*, and hidden it in the chimney. She felt a little guilty over it at times, but none the less determined that the Four Lawyers should never hear of *that*.

It was strange, exceedingly strange, to be so happy; and Jean Elspeth sometimes could hardly contain herself, she was so much ashamed of it in the presence of her sisters. Still, she drew the line, as they say, at Lucy.

And that was the strangest, most curious thing of all. After the dreadful shock of the Four Lawyers' letter, after the torment and anxiety and horror, the pantehnicons and the tradespeople, poor Tabitha and Euphemia—however brave their faces and stiff their backs—had drooped within, like flowers in autumn nipped by frost. In their pride, too, they had renounced even the friends who would have been faithful to them in their trouble.

They shut themselves up in themselves more than ever, like birds in cages. They scarcely ever even looked from the windows. It was only on Sundays they went out of doors. Euphemia, too, had sometimes to keep to her bed. And Jean Elspeth would cry to herself, "Oh, my dear, oh, my dear!" at sight of Tabitha trailing about the house with a large duster and so little to dust. To see her sipping at her water-porridge as if she were not in the least hungry, and as if it was the daintiest dish in Christendom, was like having a knife stuck in one's very breast.

Yet, such was Tabitha's "strength of mind" and hardihood, Jean Elspeth never dared to comfort her, to cheer her up, to wave her spoon by so much as a quarter of an inch in *her* direction.

In these circumstances it had seemed to Jean Elspeth it would be utterly unfair to share Lucy's company, even in her hidden mind. It would be like stealing a march, as they say. It would be cheating. At any rate, it might hurt their feelings. They would see, more stark than ever before, how desolate they were. They would look up and realize by the very light in her eyes that her old playmate had not deserted her. No. She could wait. There was plenty of time. She would keep her wishes down. And

the little secret door of her mind should be left, not, as it once was, wide open, but just ajar.

How, she could not exactly say. And yet, in spite of all this, Lucy herself, just as if she were a real live ghost, seemed to be everywhere. If in her scrubbing Jean Elspeth happened to glance up out of the window, as like as not that fair gentle face would be stealthily smiling in. If some moonlight night she leaned for a few precious sweet cold moments over her bedroom sill, as like as not that pale phantom would be seen wandering, shadowless, amid the tall whispering weeds and grasses of the lawn.

Spectres and ghosts, of course, may be the most forbidding company. But Lucy was nothing but gaiety and grace. The least little glimpse of her was like hearing a wild bird singing—even the Southern nightingale, though without those long, bubbling, grievous notes, that seem to darken the darkness. Having this ghost, then, for company, how ever much she tried not to heed it, all that Jean Elspeth *had* to do in order just to play fair—and she did it with all her might—was not to *look* for Lucy, and not to *show* that she saw her, when there she was, plain to be seen, before her very eyes. And when at last she realized her plot was succeeding, that Lucy was gone from her, her very heart seemed to come into her mouth.

And so the years went by. And the sisters became older and older, and Stoneyhouse older and older too. Walls, fences, stables, coach-house hen-house, and little lodge crept on steadily to rack and ruin. Tabitha kept more and more to herself, and the sisters scarcely spoke at mealtimes.

Then at last Euphemia fell really ill; and everything else for a while went completely out of Jean Elspeth's life

and remembrance. She hadn't a moment even to lean from her window or to read in her bed. It was unfortunate, of course, that Euphemia's bedroom was three stair-flights up. Jean Elspeth's legs grew very tired of climbing those long ladders, and Tabitha could do little else than sit at the window and knit—knit the wool of worn-out shawls and stockings into new ones. So she would stay for hours together, never raising her eyes to glance over the pair of horn-rimmed spectacles that had belonged to her grandfather, and now straddled her own lean nose. Dr. Menzies, too, was an old man now, and could visit them but seldom.

Jean Elspeth seldom even went to bed. She sat on a chair in Euphemia's room and snatched morsels of sleep, as a hungry dog snatches at bits of meat on a butcher's tray. It was on such a night as this, nodding there in her chair, that, after having seemed to fall into a long narrow nightmare hole of utter cold and darkness, and to have stayed there for centuries without light or sound, she was suddenly roused by Euphemia's voice.

It was not Euphemia's usual voice, and the words were following one another much more rapidly than usual, like sheep and lambs running through a gate. Daybreak was at the window. And in this first chill eastern light Euphemia was sitting up in bed—a thing she had been unable to do for weeks. And she was asking Jean Elspeth to tell her who the child was that was now standing at the end of her bed.

Euphemia described her, too—"A fair child with straight hair. And she is carrying a bundle of gorse, with its prickles and flowers wide open. I can smell the almond

smell. And she keeps on looking and smiling first at me, and then at you. Don't you *see*, Elspeth? Tell her, please, to go away. Tell her I don't want to be happy like that. She is making me afraid. Tell her to go away at once, please."

Jean Elspeth sat there shivering, like a snail in its shell. The awful thing was to know this visitor must be Lucy, and yet not to be able to see her—not a vestige, nothing but the iron bed and the bed-post, and Euphemia sitting there, gazing. How, then, could she tell Lucy to go away?

She hastened across the room, and took Euphemia's cold hands in hers. "You are dreaming, Euphemia. I see nothing. And if it is a pleasant dream, why banish it away?"

"No," said Euphemia, in the same strange, low, clear voice. "It is not a dream. You are deceiving me, Elspeth. She has come only to mock at me. Send her away!"

And Jean Elspeth, gazing into her sister's wide light eyes, that now seemed deeper than the deepest well that ever was on earth, was compelled to answer her.

"Please, please Euphemia, do not think of it any more. There is nothing to fear—nothing at all. Why, it sounds like Lucy—that old silly story; do you remember? But I have not seen her myself for ever so long. I couldn't while you were ill."

The lids closed gently down over the wide eyes, but Euphemia still held tight to Jean Elspeth's work-roughened hand. "Never mind, then," she whispered, "if that is all. I had no wish to take her away from you, Elspeth. Keep close to me. One thing, we are happier now, you and I."



A fair child with straight hair.

"Oh, Euphemia, do you mean that?" said Jean Elspeth, peering closer.

"Well," Euphemia replied; and it was as if there were now two voices speaking: the old Euphemia's and the low, even, dreamlike voice. "I mean it. There is plenty of air now—a different place. And I hope your friend will come as often as she pleases. There's room for us all."

And with that word "room," and the grim smile that accompanied it, all the old Euphemia seemed to have come back again, though a moment after she had dropped back upon her pillow and appeared to be asleep.

Seeing her thus still once more, Jean Elspeth very, very cautiously turned her head. The first rays of the sun were on the window. Not the faintest scent of almond was borne to her nostrils on the air. There was no sign at all of any company. A crooked frown had settled on her forehead. She was cold through and through, and her body ached, but she tried to smile, and almost imperceptibly lifted a finger just as if it held a teaspoon, and she was waving it in her own old secret childish way to her father's portrait on the wall.

Now and again after that Jean Elspeth watched the same absent far-away look steal over Euphemia's face, and the same smile, dour and grim, and yet happy—like still, deep water under waves. It was almost as if Euphemia were amused at having stolen Lucy away.

"You see, my dear," she said suddenly to Jean Elspeth one morning, as if after a long talk, "it only proves that we all go the same way home."

"Euphemia, please do not say that," whispered Jean Elspeth.

"But why not?" said Euphemia. "So it is. And *she* almost laughing out loud at me. The hussy!" . . .

None of their old friends knew when Euphemia died, so it was only Dr. Menzies and his sister who came to Stoneyhouse for the funeral. And though Jean Elspeth would now have been contented to do *all* the work in the house and to take care of Tabitha and her knitting into the bargain, they persuaded her at last that this would be impossible. And so, one blazing hot morning, having given a little parting gift to Tom Piper and wept a moment or two on Mrs. O'Phrump's ample shoulder, Jean Elspeth climbed with Tabitha into a cab, and that evening found herself hundreds of miles away from Stoneyhouse, in the two upper rooms set apart for the two ladies by Sally McGullie, who had married a fisherman and was now Mrs. John Jones.

Jean Elspeth could not have imagined a life so different. It was as if she had simply been pulled up by the roots. Whenever Tabitha could spare her—and that was seldom now—she would sit at her window looking on the square stone harbour and the sea, or in a glass shelter on its narrow front. But now that time stretched vacantly before her, and she was at liberty if she pleased to "pretend" whenever she wished, and to fall into day-dreams one after another, just as they might happen to come, it was just life's queer way that she could scarcely picture Lucy now, even with her inward eye, and never with her naked one.

It was, too, just the way of this odd world that she should pine and long for Stoneyhouse beyond words to tell. She felt sometimes she must die—suffocate—of homesickness,

and would frown at the grey moving sea, as if that alone were the enemy who was keeping her away from it. Not only this, but she saved up in a tin money-box every baw-bee which she could spare of the little money the Four Lawyers had managed to save from the caoutchouc. And all for one distant purpose.

And at length, years and years afterwards, she told Mrs. Jones that she could bear herself no longer, that—like the cat in the fairy-tale—she must pay a visit, and must go alone. . . .

It was on an autumn afternoon, about five o'clock, and long shadows were creeping across the grasses of the forsaken garden, when Jean Elspeth came into sight again of Stoneyhouse, and found herself standing some little distance from the gaunt familiar walls by a small pond that had formed itself in a hollow of the garden. Her father had delighted in water, and, making use of a tiny stream that coursed near by, had made a jetting fountain and a fishpond. The fountain having long ceased to flow and the pond having become choked with water-weeds, the stream had pushed its way out across the hollows, and had made itself this dank dark resting-place. You might almost have thought it was trying to copy Jean Elspeth's life in Sally Jones's seaside cottage. On the other hand, the windows of the great house did not stare so fiercely now; they were blurred and empty, like the eyes of a man walking in his sleep. One of the chimney-stacks had toppled down, and creepers had rambled all over the wide expanse of the walls.

Jean Elspeth, little old woman that she now was, in her small black bonnet and a beaded mantle that had belonged

to Euphemia, stood there drinking the great still scene in, as a dry sponge drinks salt water.

And after hesitating for some little time, she decided to venture nearer. She pushed her way through the matted wilderness of the garden, crossed the terrace, and presently peered in through one of the dingy dining-room windows. Half a shutter had by chance been left unclosed. When her eyes were grown accustomed to the gloom within, she discovered that the opposite wall was now quite empty. The portrait of her grandfather must have slowly unravelled through its cord. It had fallen face upwards on to the boards beneath.

It saddened her to see this. She had left the picture hanging there simply because she felt sure that Euphemia would so have wished it to hang. But though she wearied herself out seeking to find entry into the house, in order, at least, to lean her grandfather up again against the wall, it was in vain. The doors were rustily bolted; the lower windows tight shut. And it was beginning to be twilight when she found herself once more beside the dark-watered pond.

All this while she had been utterly alone. It had been a dreadful and sorrowful sight to see the great house thus decaying, and all this neglect. Yet she was not unhappy, for it seemed with its trees and greenery in this solitude to be uncomplaining and at peace. And so, too, was she. It was as if her whole life had just vanished and flitted away like a dream leaving merely her body standing there in the evening light under the boughs of the heavy chestnut-tree overhead.

And then by chance, in that still hush, her eyes wandered



to the surface of the water at her feet, and there fixed themselves, her whole mind in a sudden confusion. For by some strange freak of the cheating dusk, she saw gazing back at her from under a squat old crape bonnet, with Euphemia's cast-off beaded mantle on the shoulders beneath it, a face not in the least like that of the little old woman inside them, but a face, fair and smiling, as of one eternally young and happy and blessed—Lucy's. She gazed and gazed, in the darkening evening. A peace beyond understanding enwrapt her spirit. It was by far the oddest thing that had ever happened to Jean Elspeth in all the eighty years of her odd, long life on earth.



ON WHINNEY MOOR

By BLANCHE WINDER

ON the bracken hill
Whinney Moor way
You may see a strange sight
Any time o' day.
A green tall man
With a crooked knee
Goes trot-trot-trot
Unceasingly.

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ON WHINNEY MOOR

He lifts each foot
High on the hill,
He steps and he steps,
Yet he stays quite still.
From his either ear
A ring hangs down
In a silver disc
Like a big half-crown.
Long ribbons float
Round his crooked knee
Green as the leaves
Of an alder-tree.
Green are his breeches,
Green is his hat,
With a great gold buckle
Wide and flat.
His puffing breath
And his quick loud feet
Sound like a farmer
Threshing wheat.
On a bending stalk
A pipit stares
And forgets to sing.
The rough brown hares
That squat so flat
In the long deep grass
Wonder why he takes
Such a while to pass.
But the still grey sheep,
That look like stones,
Never lift a head



The rough brown hares
That squat so flat.

ON WHINNEY MOOR

From the sunburnt downs
As this green tall man,
With the crooked knee,
Goes trot-trot-trot
Unceasingly.

His goblin feet
As they strike the ground
Are turning the big world
Round and round!
Round goes Stony Hill
And wide Merrow Down,
Stately Windsor Castle
Noisy London town!
Round goes England
From Deeside to Penzance,
Round goes Scotland
And round goes France,
Turned and turned
As fast as can be
By the green tall man
With the crooked knee
And the goblin feet
You may see any day
You happen to pass
Whinney Moor way.



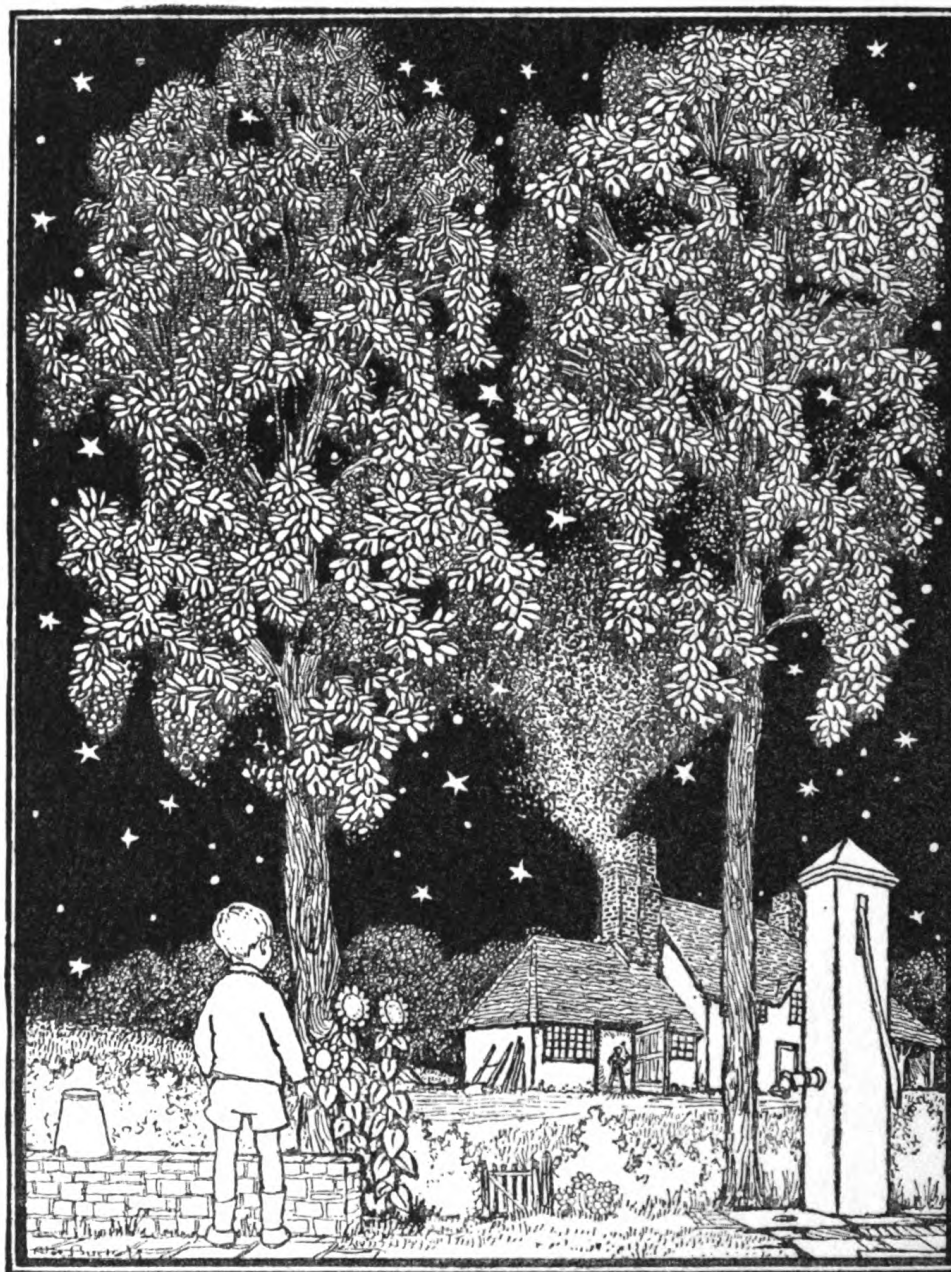
THE BLACKSMITH

By B. K. PYKE

ALL the night
And all day long
I hark to the sound
Of the blacksmith's song.

Red his fire—
The bright sparks fly
To dance with stars
In the joyous sky.





The bright sparks fly.

SARAH BYNG

WHO COULD NOT READ AND WAS TOSSED INTO A
THORNY HEDGE BY A BULL

By HILAIRE BELLOC

SOME years ago you heard me sing
My doubts on *Alexander Byng*.
His sister SARAH now inspires
My jaded Muse, my failing fires.
Of Sarah Byng the tale is told
How though the child was twelve years old
She could not read or write a line.

Her sister Jane,



though barely nine,

Could spout the Catechism through
And parts of Matthew Arnold too,
While little Bill, who came between



Was quite unnaturally keen
On *Athalie*, by Jean Racine.

But not so Sarah! Not so Sal!
She was a most uncultured girl

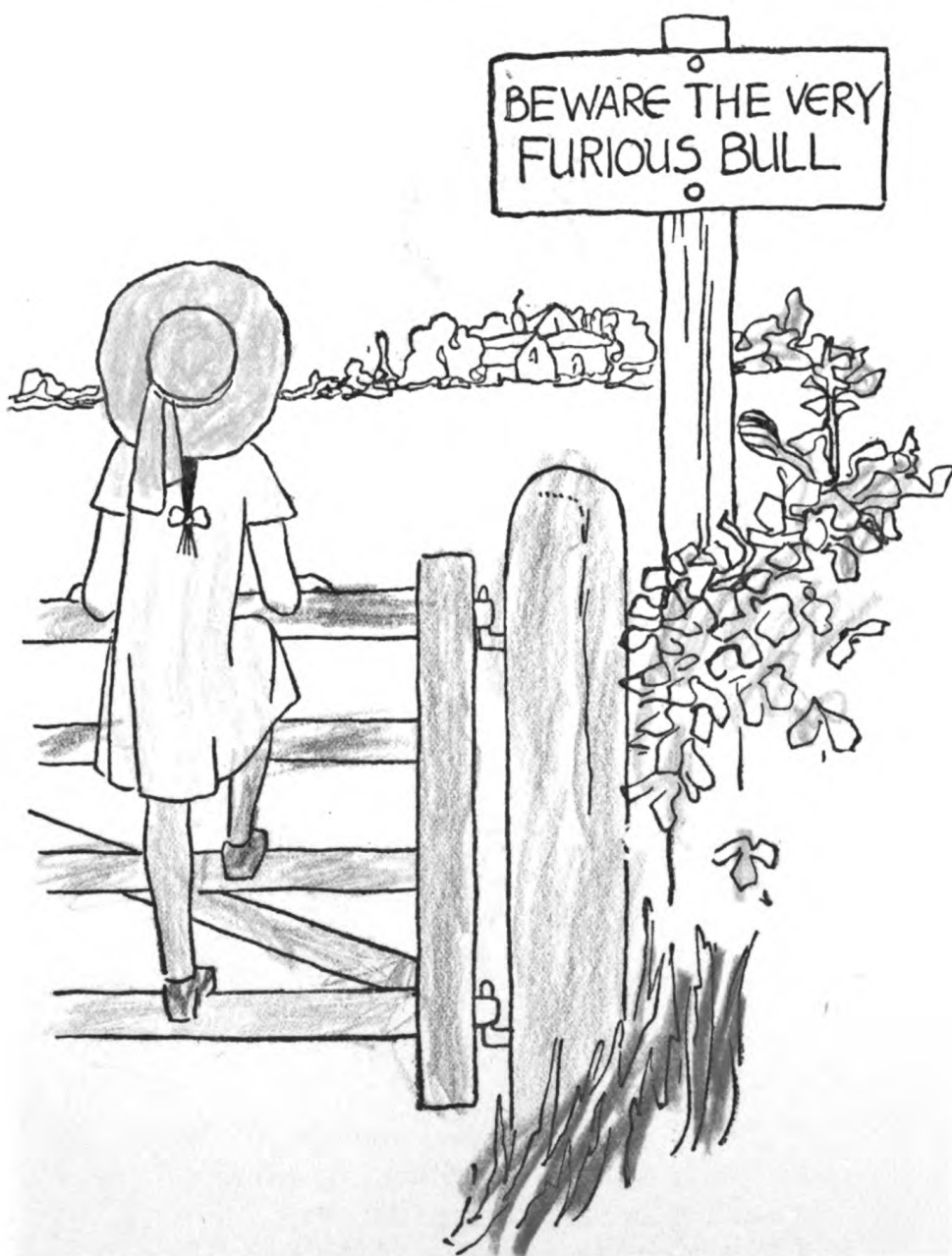


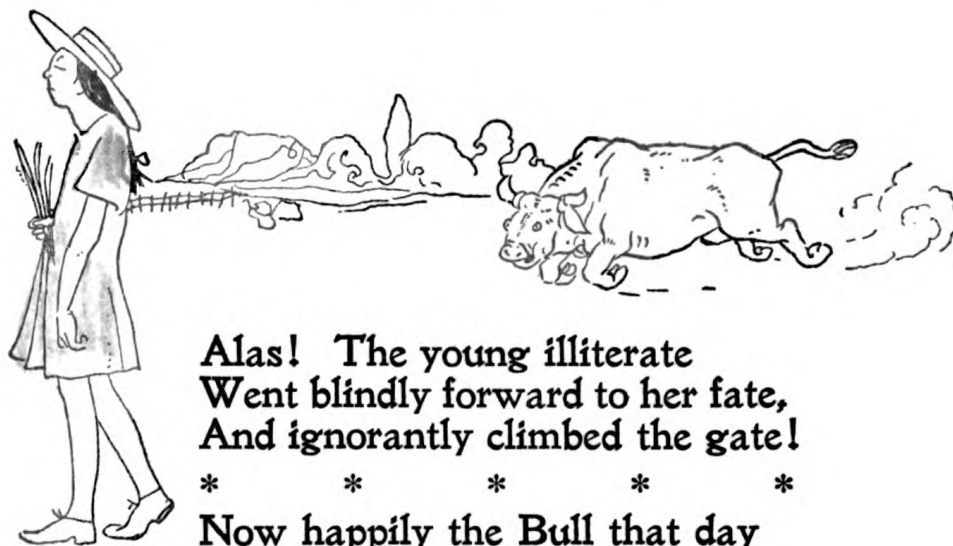
Who didn't care a pinch of snuff
For any literary stuff
And gave the classics all a miss.
Observe the consequence of this!

As she was walking home one day,
Upon the fields



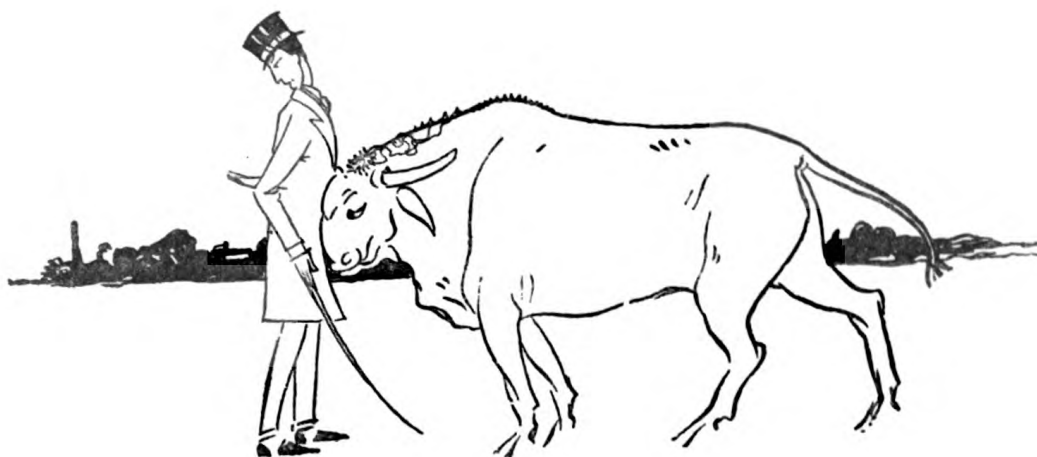
across her way
A gate, securely padlocked, stood,
And by its side a piece of wood
On which was painted plain and full



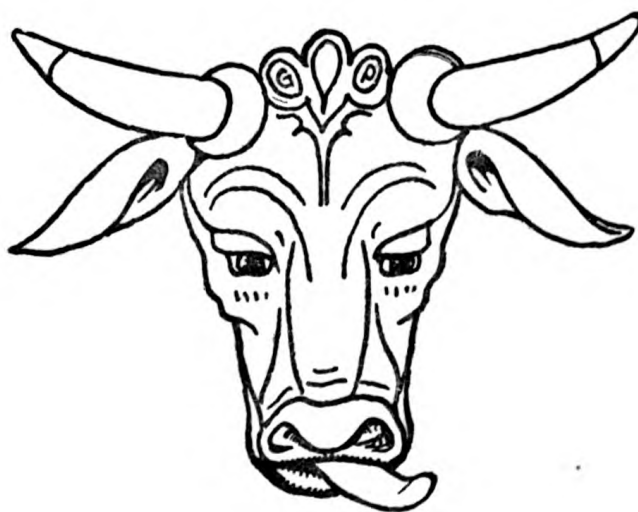


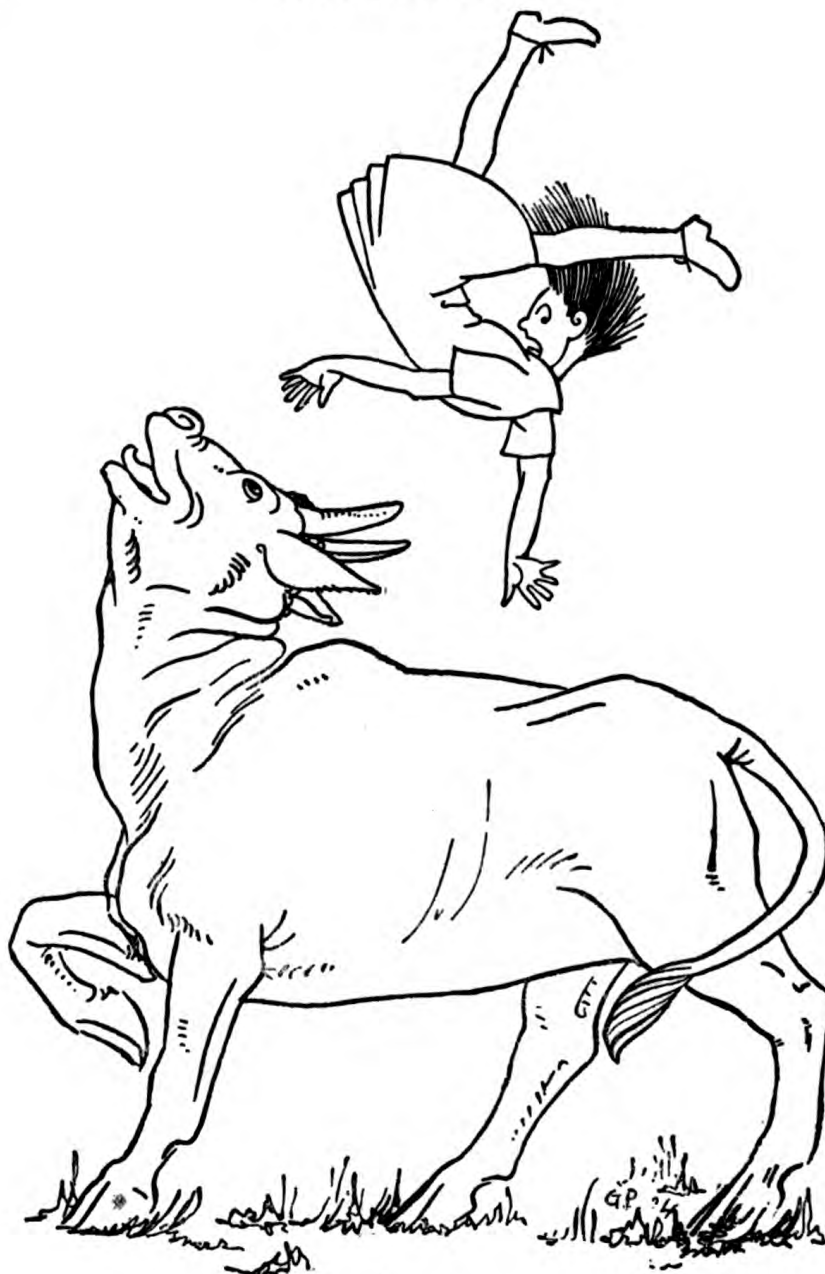
Was rather in a mood for play

Than goring people through and through



As Bulls so very often do;





He tossed her lightly with his horns

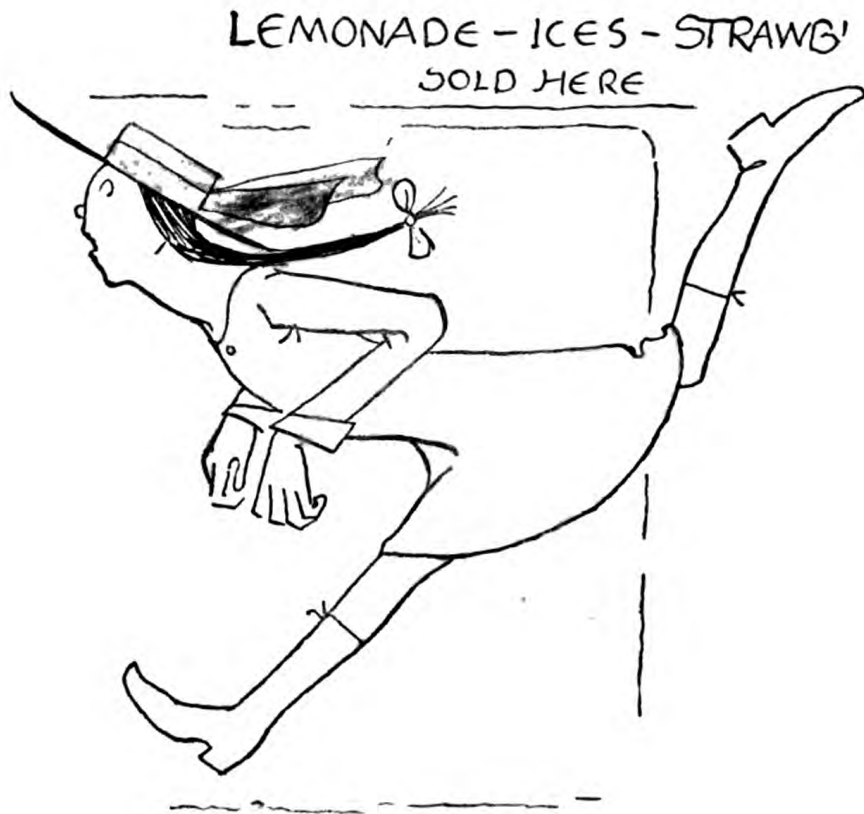
Into a prickly hedge of thorns,



And stood by laughing while she strode
And pushed and struggled to the road.

* * * * *

The lesson was not lost upon
The child, who, since, has always gone
A long way round to keep away



From signs, whatever they may say,
And leaves a padlocked gate alone.
Moreover she has wisely grown
Confirmed in her instinctive guess
That letters always bring distress.



THE END

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